

# MYSTIC VOICES



ROGER PATER

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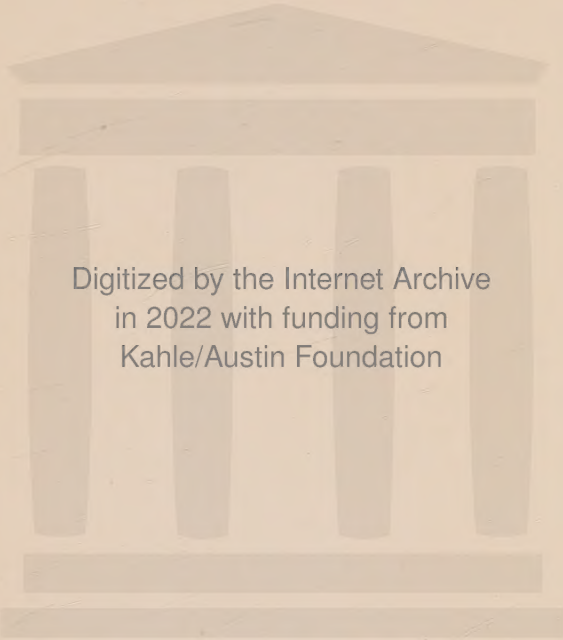




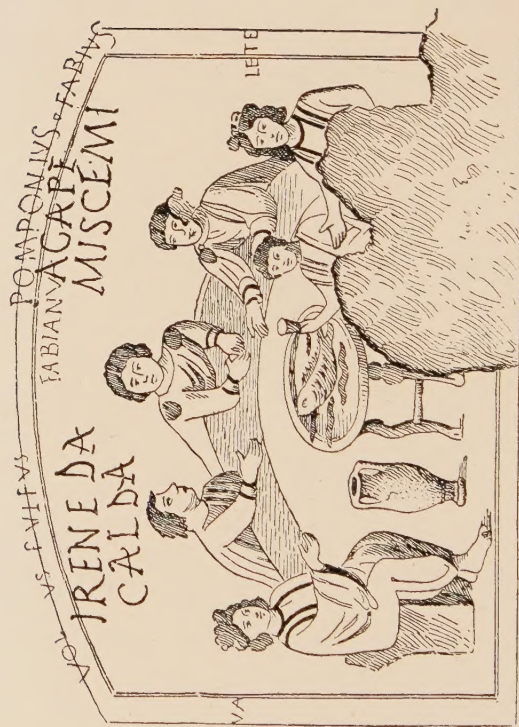
MYSTIC VOICES







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THE AGAPE or SYMBOLIC SUPPER

A fresco in the catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome (see p. 119)

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from Lanciani's "Pagan and Christian Rome" (1895).*

# MYSTIC VOICES

*Being Experiences of*

THE REV. PHILIP RIVERS PATER

*Squire and Priest*

1834-1913

BY

ROGER PATER

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE curious experiences collected in this volume were told me by my cousin, an old priest more than forty years my senior, in the course of the two or three years which I spent with him immediately before his death.

I had never met my old relative until this period, because of the estrangement between my father and himself, which had resulted from a quarrel that took place between them many years before I was born. In this quarrel I have always understood that my father was chiefly to blame; indeed, he told me so himself, shortly before he died. But, strange to say, it affected my cousin far more than it did the real offender; and from that date he became more and more of a recluse, usually living alone at Stanton Rivers with a few servants, most of whom had served the family from childhood, and seeing hardly anyone except some five or six intimate friends, chiefly priests, who would come and stay at the old manor house for a few days at a time.

It was not long after the quarrel I have mentioned that my cousin decided to take Holy Orders. The family had kept to the old religion all through the penal times, except once when the squire of the

period had conformed to the Established Church. But in no previous case had the head of the family ever become a priest, though there had been a fair sprinkling of vocations among the younger sons, and one—a Benedictine monk—had died for his priesthood on the scaffold at Tyburn.

No small uneasiness therefore seems to have been felt by the servants and tenants on the estate, when the squire announced his intention, and set out for Rome, to make his studies at the College of Noble Ecclesiastics. However, when he returned no changes were made, and except that the squire wore a cassock and said Mass, instead of wearing gaiters and shooting pheasants, the little world of Stanton Rivers rolled on just as it had done before. But gradually, very gradually, the relations between landlord and tenants became modified. The squire's priestly character told upon his people, and their loyal respect deepened into a personal love for him, which grew with the years, until, to one like myself, who came upon it suddenly, it seemed almost the atmosphere of another world.

As I went about the estate, which all too soon was to become my own, I heard on every side of his acts of charity and thoughtfulness; and I cannot help thinking that one cause of his goodness to the tenants was the wish to make some amends for his life-long estrangement from my father, who was his only near relative. During the brief time I spent

with him in those last years of his life, I learned to love him much as a saint's disciples love their master. When, with the simplicity of a child, he spoke of things spiritual, he made this world seem as if it were less real to him than the invisible world of the soul. For him, in fact, I am convinced that this was literally the case, and that he looked forward to death as a child looks forward to going home at the end of a long term.

Still, it was only because of a chance phrase, which I did not understand at the moment, that he came to tell me the occurrences with which this volume deals; and, but for my curiosity on the subject, I do not think that he would have made any further reference to them. It may have been merely the reticence of an ultra-sensitive nature, which feared a rebuff, or, worse still, a coldly polite acceptance of the tale, which masks the hearer's patent disbelief in it. But I think the chief reason for his silence was that, for him, such sensible evidence of the supernatural had ceased to be of interest; since, by the time I knew him, he had come to live habitually in a higher state of the spiritual life, where mystical union with God was so real and so direct that these earlier experiences had lost their value for him.

The stories were written down in a kind of diary, and usually on the day on which I heard them; but for some time I have hesitated about giving them to

the public. However, those who have read the original manuscript have urged me to do so, and in any case I do not see that any harm can come from their publication. If, on the other hand, these pages prove a help to anyone, that fact, I am sure, will reconcile the spirit of my dear old relative to the wider circulation of his strange experiences. In cases where offence might, perhaps, be given by revealing the identity of the characters, I have changed the names, dates, etc., and made any other slight modifications that were necessary to secure anonymity; but apart from this, the stories are exactly as I heard them. In most cases the events described took place many years before they were related to me, but whenever I have been able to check the account by questioning such of the actors as are still living, I have found the squire's memory to be accurate in practically every detail; so I do not doubt that in all essentials the records which follow are perfectly reliable.

I gladly take this opportunity of thanking the Editor of *The Catholic World* for permission to reprint such of the stories as have appeared in its pages; and also of acknowledging the kindness of Messrs. Houghton Mifflin and Co., in permitting me to reproduce the plate from Lanciani's *Pagan and Christian Rome*, which forms the frontispiece to this volume.

ROGER PATER



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# MYSTIC VOICES

## THE WARNINGS

**T**HE library at Stanton Rivers is a long room, facing west, on the ground-floor of the mansion. On a summer evening the last rays of the sun come in at the broad mullioned windows, causing bright gleams of gold and colour on the backs of the long rows of books.

The old squire-priest was sitting by the oriel window with a rug across his knees, and the light on his white hair and thin refined features made him look like one of the portraits that hung in the long gallery. For some time he had been speaking of the ways in which God's providence had dealt with him, how wonderfully he answers the petitions of his servants, far better than man can foresee when he makes his prayer; and the quiet tone of conviction made his words doubly impressive. After this he remained silent for some minutes while I was thinking over his words. Then abruptly he began again.

"You understand, do you not?" he asked, with a quiet look at me.

"I think so," I answered, "at least all but one point. There was a phrase you used just now

which was new to me. You were speaking of mental prayer and the light God gives you in it; of prayers for guidance in any special difficulty, and how, after a while, light seems to grow upon the mind, and the will becomes clear how to act, as if in obedience to some divine command. And then, all at once, you added, 'But this is quite different to the direct speech that sometimes comes to me.' Now that is what I want you to explain to me; what do you mean exactly by the phrase 'direct speech'?"

The old priest smiled as I stopped speaking, but he kept silence so long that I began to feel uneasy, and started to apologize for my curiosity, fearing lest the question had offended him.

"No, no," said he quickly, "it isn't that at all. I am quite willing to answer your question; the difficulty is to make myself intelligible." After another pause he began again.

"The phrase which puzzled you is one that I have come to use for a certain kind of experience which happens to me from time to time. Sometimes it takes the form of a sentence, sometimes only of a word or two, sometimes of long-continued sound or speech, but always it appeals to the sense of hearing."

At this I felt more mystified than ever, and I suppose my face betrayed me, for the old man seemed to see it, and continued. "If you like I will give you some examples of what I mean, but first I



must warn you that, although it is many years now since first this kind of thing occurred to me, it still remains without any satisfactory explanation so far as I can see. Moreover I am quite clear that the sound or voice I hear is not due to merely natural causes, as one might mistake a noise heard in the dark and attribute it to some agency other than the one which really caused it.

“There is one other point as well which makes my experience somewhat unusual. No doubt you have heard of apparitions at the hour of death, cases where the form of a dying man or woman has been seen by someone far away from where the death took place, and who, moreover, did not know his friend was ill. In several instances my voices have warned me of deaths among my friends and relatives, but, instead of this happening at the moment of death, such warnings have always occurred a considerable time afterwards, and only a little while before the news reached me through some ordinary channel.”

“May I interrupt a moment?” I asked. “Let me be clear on one point before you give me any instances. The voices you hear, are they objective, really sounding in your ears, or are they merely internal, like words spoken in the mind?”

“Sometimes they are undoubtedly subjective,” he answered, “but more often they seem to me absolutely external to myself, and, once or twice, it

has definitely been my own voice that I heard, my lips and tongue speaking the words aloud without any control on my part, so far as I could tell."

I thanked him and promised not to interrupt again if he would give me some examples of his strange experience, and after a few moments' thought he began once more.

"I am not sure how old I was when this kind of thing first occurred to me, but sometimes I think it must have been when I was quite a child. My old nurse, who remained here as housekeeper for many years, has told me that, quite soon after I learned to talk, I used to come to her and ask what some phrase or other meant. Then, if she questioned me as to who had used the words, all I could answer was just, 'I heard them,' but who had spoken them I could never tell.

"However, if that were the same thing, the faculty passed away for a time, and the first definite instance I remember came soon after I had left school. I was then in my eighteenth year, and the things of God and religion played a smaller part in my life than they have ever done before or since; indeed, the morality of acts interested me less than the question whether they were 'good form' in a young man of my position.

"As you know, I had one brother, four years my senior, of whom I was very fond. My father had recently purchased him a commission in the army,

and he was with his regiment in a provincial garrison town at the time of my story.

“For myself I had no very definite ideas about a profession, although, as a boy, I had leanings towards the priesthood. That idea passed away, however, when I was about fifteen, so I fell in readily with my father’s proposal, that I should enter the law. I left school soon after my seventeenth birthday, and, after some preliminaries, was duly articulated to our solicitors in London, a firm which had a large connection among old Catholic families. Life in town was a novelty to me, and I enjoyed it thoroughly, but the office hours were long, and I seldom got any time to myself before six in the evening. However, that left me free to go to the theatre, and I think I went to see some play or other nearly every week.

“On the night in question the piece I went to was *Hamlet*, with Macready in the title rôle. It was my favourite among Shakespeare’s plays, but I had never seen it acted. After waiting some little time for the doors to open, I got a good place, and sat waiting for the curtain to go up. I think I may say that nothing was further from my mind at the moment than my brother Oswald; indeed, all my thoughts were about the play.<sup>1</sup> Then, suddenly, as if someone were whispering into my ears, I heard quite distinctly the words, ‘Oswald is dead.’ I gave a start and looked round at my neighbour on the

right; there was no one on my left, as I was next the gangway. But my neighbour was turned away from me, talking to his companion, and obviously had not spoken the words, for, as I looked at him, they came again, 'Oswald is dead.' Now the only Oswald I knew was my brother, and, with a shock, I realized that, if the words meant anything to me at all, they must refer to him. At that moment they came a third time, 'Oswald is dead.' I began to be rather alarmed, although I confess I felt it must all be some strange illusion, and half thought of leaving the theatre. But just then a bell rang, up went the curtain, and the whole incident was soon forgotten in the absorbing interest of the great drama.

"It was nearly midnight when the play was over, and I walked home to my rooms half intoxicated with the emotions of the tragedy, and without a thought of the strange occurrence that had happened just before the play. Arrived at my rooms, I let myself in with a latchkey, and walked quietly upstairs. To my surprise, on reaching my landing, I saw a bright line of light beneath the door of my sitting-room, and heard someone moving inside. Entering quickly, my surprise was doubled at finding the head of the firm to whom I was articled pacing up and down the room. He turned on hearing me enter, and, as he did so, I saw that he held a telegram in his hand. Now telegrams were still

a novelty in those days, and I guessed at once that something serious was the matter. 'My dear boy,' he said, 'I have been waiting here for hours; your father has sent this telegram, and asked me to break the news to you.' In a flash the words I had heard in the theatre came back to me, but I kept silent as he continued, 'Your brother Oswald, I am grieved to say, died suddenly this morning.' On inquiry afterwards I learned that his death had been caused by an accident a few minutes before midday, about seven hours before I heard the words in the theatre."

"Very strange, very strange indeed," I said, as the old priest remained silent; "and was that the end of the incident?"

"I think I must say it was," he replied, "but, oddly enough, the next occurrence of the kind took place precisely a year later to the day, and I sometimes think the two may be connected. At that date I was due to go in for my first law examination, and, by arrangement with my principal, I stayed away from the office for several weeks before it, so as to give my whole time to reading. By that time I was fairly sure that I had made a mistake in taking up the law as a profession, and this did not make it easier to work hard at my books. In fact, I found it a real difficulty to keep my attention fixed upon the work, so I sometimes used to read the book out aloud, as that seemed to make it easier.

“ I mentioned that the day in question was the anniversary of my brother’s death, but the fact had quite slipped my memory, and I did not even notice the coincidence until it was pointed out to me later. Somehow, that morning, I was more stupid than usual, or perhaps my law treatise was exceptionally dry; anyhow, I found it almost impossible to keep awake over my work. I tried reading aloud, and, as that was only a partial success, I put the book upon a tall desk and read aloud standing up. Suddenly at the street door there came the sharp double rap that means a telegram, and, on the moment, I heard my own voice say, ‘ That telegram is to tell me father is dead,’ and then it went on with the sentence of the book just as if the words had been printed on the page.

“ A moment before I had been half asleep, but now I was wide awake with every nerve a-tingle. As I stood waiting, I heard the maid pass along the passage to the front-door; it opened and shut again, and her steps came back towards my room. A moment later I had taken the telegram and torn it open. It read, ‘ Father dangerously ill; come at once,’ and was signed by my sister. I hurried home by the first train I could catch, and, on arrival, was told that my father had died at eight o’clock that morning; quite three hours before I received the telegram, which was purposely worded falsely so as to break the shock of his death to me.”



The old man stopped speaking and gazed out for a few moments into the gathering darkness, as if lost in the memories his story had awakened. Then he turned to me with a smile of interrogation.

"Those were the first occasions on which I heard the voices I call 'direct speech'; what do you make of them?" he asked. The question was a difficult one, for I did not know what to make of them.

"It was a strange experience," I said slowly, "very strange indeed. At first sight it all appears so purposeless. But I will ask you to let me reserve my judgement until I have had some time to think it all over, and another day perhaps you will give me some further instances."

The old man rose slowly from his chair, "That I will do with pleasure," he replied, "if you are sure it does not bore you to listen to my ramblings."

"Indeed, sir," I began in protest, but his smile reassured me as he took my arm, and walked slowly down the long room towards the door.

## THE PERSECUTION CHALICE

**A**LL next morning the old squire-priest was occupied with his estate agent, and, except during Mass and breakfast, I did not even see him. However, his work was finished by lunch time, and the agent, who had stayed to that meal, left the house as soon as it was over to catch his train. We both came to the door to see him off, and, when the dog-cart had passed out of the courtyard, the old priest walked, leaning on my arm, to the end of the upper terrace. Here there was an arbour of clipped yew trees, with a seat which looked out across the formal garden and over the lower terrace to the park beyond. The day was warm and bright, and the whole place wore an air of peace and quiet, so restful that we sat in silence for a minute or two enjoying the beauty of the scene.

"I have had your stories of last night in my head ever since," I said at length, "and I have a theory to offer, if you care to hear it."

"Please go on," he said with an air of interest, and, after a moment's thought, I began again.

"You said, I think, that one of the points which seemed to you most unaccountable was the long time that elapsed in both cases between the time



of the death and the moment when you heard the voice which warned you of it?"

"Yes," he answered, "that is, to me, one of the strangest features of the whole affair."

"Well, that is the point my theory explains," said I; "of course I don't expect you to agree with it, but this is my idea. If the voice, or message, or whatever we call it, had occurred at the moment of death, you would be inclined to attribute it to the dying man—your brother Oswald in the first case and your father in the second—would you not?"

"Certainly," he answered.

"Very well then," I continued, "I think it follows that, as the occurrence took place so many hours after the moment of death, the motive force which started the telepathic current—which sent the message, if you prefer to put it so—must have been someone else; someone who was intent on communicating with you at the precise moment when you heard the voice."

"That certainly sounds very plausible," he acknowledged, "but who could it have been?"

"In the first instance I think it was your principal, the head of the firm to whom your father had wired, asking him to break the news to you. He received the telegram before leaving his office, and not knowing where you were, was concentrating all his thoughts on how to communicate with you.

This concentration of mind, I suggest, produced the words you heard in the theatre."

"That is certainly very ingenious," he admitted, "and I must own I never thought of such an explanation before. But how about the second case? Does your theory fit that one as perfectly?"

"Well, no," I acknowledged, "I don't see that it does. Unless by chance the boy who brought the telegram had seen it in the post office, and guessed that the words really understated the truth. But it is foolish of me to theorize so soon; you promised to give me some more examples of the phenomenon, would you care to do so now?"

"By all means," said he, "I will tell you another occurrence of the kind; it happened several years after the cases you have heard already. As you know, I was ordained priest in Rome, and returned here soon afterwards. It was delightful to be home again after spending several years out of England; but one thing I felt dreadfully, and that was the absence of all the externals of Catholicism. Even now it is bad enough in a little country place like this, but forty years ago things were much worse; and after the splendid functions of Rome—Rome before 1870, you recollect—I soon found myself longing to see a High Mass, and hear the liturgy chanted once again. Well, this longing grew upon me so much that I determined to spend Christmas away from home, either abroad or at some religious house in

England, and eventually I arranged to go to Faversham.

“ I think you told me the other day that you have never been there ?” I shook my head, and the old man continued.

“ Then I must tell you a little about the place first of all, to make the rest of my story clear. Faversham is a Benedictine Abbey, though it was only a Priory at the date of which I am speaking. The community have only been established in their present home since the French Revolution. Until then, from the foundation of the monastery somewhere in Queen Elizabeth’s reign, the monks were settled at Arras in Flanders. The English Benedictines, as I expect you know, trace their origin back without a break to pre-Reformation times, and the Faversham community always obtained enough vocations from their school to keep the monastery exclusively English, until at last a return to England became possible. Now, during the Reign of Terror the good monks at Arras were arrested and put in prison. They were monks and they were English, which was reason enough I suppose; but, although they remained in prison nearly two years, they were never brought to trial, and when Robespierre fell they were soon set free and allowed to retire to England.

“ During their two years in prison the community kept up their regular life as far as possible under the circumstances, and by some means—

probably by bribing the guards—they managed to smuggle into prison with them a chalice, altar stone and missal, with a set of vestments and everything absolutely essential for celebrating the divine mysteries. Then on the Sundays and great festivals, through all the period of the Terror, they rose soon after midnight, covered the windows with their straw mattresses, and one of the number said Mass and gave communion to the others. On their retirement to England they brought the chalice with them; you can see it in their sacristy to-day.

“To Faversham, then, I travelled a few days before Christmas, and the quiet, peaceful surroundings formed a perfect preparation for the great festival. The country was new to me then, and though the monastery is less than two miles from a small town on the edge of a coal-mining district, in the other direction there lie great open moors, where you may wander for hours without meeting a single human being. In those days the beautiful abbey church was only partly built, and I used to say Mass in a little chapel above the north cloister. Nowadays this chapel looks down into the south choir aisle, but at that time the arches were closed with a wooden partition, as the choir had not yet been begun. Indeed, the transepts were the only part of the church that was finished, and my chapel was reached by a spiral staircase in one corner of the south transept, which also communicated with the organ loft.

I have to give you these details because they affect the story later on; the important point is, first, that my chapel was accessible only by the spiral staircase from the south transept, and, secondly, that its northern wall was pierced with arches closed at that time with a wooden partition, beyond which was the open air, as the choir was not yet built. I hope that is clear. The third day of my stay was the Vigil of Christmas, and when I came in from my walk that afternoon I found the sacristan busy laying out vestments and making preparations for the feast day.

“ ‘ The Prior has decided to have midnight Mass this year,’ he said to me, as I came into the sacristy to offer my help in his work.

“ ‘ But don’t you always have it on Christmas night ?’ I asked with some surprise.

“ ‘ Well, we always used to,’ he answered, ‘ but four years ago a Protestant agitator worked up the miners at Bursdon, and the mob announced their intention of coming to wreck the church if we had a Mass at midnight. I don’t believe anything would have happened, but the police were anxious about it, and persuaded the Prior not to have one, and we have gone without it for three years now. However, the excitement seems quite forgotten by this time, and we are going to begin it again.’

“ ‘ I’m glad of that,’ I said; ‘ you know this is my first Christmas as a priest, and I should have been

sorry to miss midnight Mass. Am I to say my three Masses in the chapel upstairs as usual ?

“ ‘ Oh yes, please,’ he answered. ‘ I have got the bailiff’s son to come and serve you; he will be here at seven o’clock. By the way, would you mind laying out your own vestments, as the Brothers have so much to do ? I will give you a chalice now, it will be quite safe upstairs; no one will go there before to-morrow morning.’

“ Of course I said I would do what he asked, and he opened the safe and took out a chalice.

“ ‘ I thought you might like to use the Persecution Chalice,’ said he; ‘ you know its history, don’t you ?’

“ ‘ I’m afraid I don’t,’ I answered, ‘ but from the name I should guess it is one that was used in England during the penal times.’

“ ‘ Oh no, not that at all,’ he said, ‘ it was——,’ but just at that moment the bell rang for Vespers, and my good friend hurriedly excused himself, saying, ‘ I’ll tell you the story later.’

“ I took the chalice upstairs to my chapel, and made it ready with the three large altar breads. Then, after laying out the vestments, I came down to the church just as Vespers had begun. Supper followed Vespers, and, soon afterwards, I went to my room and lay down, so as to get some sleep before eleven o’clock, when the Matins for Christmas were to begin, the High Mass following at a



few minutes after midnight. Neither then nor later did I give a thought to the chalice, nor to the story I was to hear about it. Indeed, the whole affair was driven out of my mind by the beautiful liturgy of the Christmas Office and Mass.

"After the midnight services I went to bed as usual, and was called by the lay-brother a little after six o'clock. I got up, dressed, made my preparation for Mass, and opened my window wider before going downstairs. As I did so I noticed how perfectly still it was. There had been a little frost in the night, but no snow, and the silence was absolute. I stood at the window for perhaps half a minute; the bleat of a far-away sheep suddenly broke the silence, and then it closed down again, almost oppressive in its stillness. When I got to my chapel I found the bailiff's boy waiting for me, so I vested at once, and began my first Christmas Mass. Besides the server and myself, there was no one else in the chapel.

"Just after the Offertory, when I had washed my fingers and was bowing down for the prayer before the *Orate fratres*, I noticed a sound far away outside the monastery. It was only a momentary distraction, and I paid no real attention to it, but went on to say the Secret and the Preface. At the *Sanctus* the boy rang the bell as usual, though there was no congregation. As I commenced the Canon I heard the sound again. It was somewhere to the

north of the buildings; quite a long distance away, I thought, but certainly nearer and louder than it had been. Try as I might to ignore the distraction, I could not help wondering what it could be.

“As the consecration approached I forgot all about it, but no sooner had I risen again after the elevation of the chalice than it forced itself on my notice once more. There was no doubt whatever, the sound was much nearer, and now it seemed to me like a number of people shouting. ‘Like a crowd at a football match,’ I thought to myself, adding mentally, ‘It can’t be that, whatever it is.’ Then, all at once, I remembered what the Father Sacristan had said about the threat of the miners at Bursdon. Perhaps that was the explanation. They had heard about the midnight Mass, and were coming to wreck the church as they had threatened !

“The theory seemed only too probable, for the noise was now quite close at hand, and it was unquestionably the howling of an angry mob. I began to wonder what I ought to do if they did actually break into the church before I had finished the Mass. ‘If a church catches fire,’ I said to myself, ‘the *Rubricæ generales* order the priest to proceed at once to the communion, and end the Mass directly after that.’ I determined to do the same. By this time the noise was almost upon us; it seemed as if the rioters were coming quickly up the road leading from the gatehouse to the church. I could distin-



guish the different tone and pitch of many voices, some high, some deep, but could not catch any of the words. Even in my anxiety this struck me as odd. 'It is just like a mob in a foreign country,' I thought; 'I can't make out a word they say.'

"However, in spite of my alarm I stuck to my Mass, determined to go straight to the communion if the mob attacked the church. I thought to myself, 'They won't come here at once, for no one would guess there is a chapel up that little spiral stair.' The shouting was almost at the door by now, and I had just said the *Agnus Dei*, when suddenly the whole noise stopped abruptly. I could not imagine what had happened, but the relief was immense. I finished the Mass, and as no further disturbance came, I went on and said the other two Masses: not a sign did my rioters make. I felt thoroughly mystified about the whole affair, and began to doubt if my theory of a Protestant mob could be the true explanation, so I called to my server as he was leaving the chapel after covering up the altar.

" 'What did you make of that extraordinary noise during the first Mass?' I asked him.

" 'What noise, Father?' he answered, to my utter amazement.

" 'Why, that shouting or cheering, or whatever it was,' I said, 'you must have heard it. It began

soon after the Offertory, and went on almost up to the communion.'

" 'I didn't notice any noise, Father,' said the boy; 'who would be shouting or cheering so early on Christmas morning?'

" 'Oh, well,' I said, as carelessly as I could manage, 'perhaps it was my fancy; but thank you very much for coming to serve Mass for me,' and I went to my *prie-dieu*.

" Still wondering what the true explanation could be, I finished my thanksgiving, and went down to the refectory. A number of the community were already seated, and a few minutes later my friend, the Father Sacristan, came in and sat beside me at the guest table.

" 'By the way,' he said, after some minutes' conversation, 'I never finished telling you about the Persecution Chalice which you used this morning. Do you know, it never struck me before, but, as you said, the name suggests a chalice used in England during the penal times, while it really refers to something quite different. That chalice is the one which our fathers smuggled into prison with them during the French Revolution; you must remember my telling you how they managed to take in a whole set of things for Mass, and how they celebrated it at intervals during all the Reign of Terror.'

" 'Of course I remember it,' I said, for light was

beginning to dawn upon me; 'and was that the identical chalice which I used this morning?'

" 'That is it,' he answered; 'we don't often use it now, unless someone wishes to do so out of devotion. There cannot be many chalices in existence with so strange a history.'

" 'I should think not,' I answered, 'it was a most daring thing to do. I wonder what would have happened to the good monks if they had been caught saying Mass?'

" 'No difficulty in guessing that,' he answered, 'the guillotine for the whole number. You know the story goes that they were nearly caught on one occasion.'

" 'Indeed,' said I, 'you did not tell me about that; how did it happen?'

" 'It was on Christmas morning,' he answered, 'and the Mass was being celebrated by the youngest priest in the community. He had been ordained only a few months before they were sent to prison, and it was his first Christmas Mass. I suppose he took longer than an older priest would have done, and the story goes, too, that the monk whose turn it was to watch and wake the rest had gone to sleep, so that they began much later than had been intended. Anyway, before the Mass was half finished a loud shouting was heard in the distance, which gradually came nearer and nearer to the prison, and finally stopped just at the very gates. Some luckless aris-

tocrat had been caught trying to fly the country, and the howling rabble were bringing him back for execution. They say the young priest was seized with fear, and could hardly go on with the Mass, but the saintly old Prior came up and said to him, 'Proceed, my son, they will not come in hither; the Lord is mindful of them that serve him.' And in fact the Mass was finished without discovery, though the mob were howling in the courtyard below the windows before it was over. Little did they guess there was nothing but a straw pallet between themselves and God's most holy sacrifice !' "

## IN ARTICULO MORTIS

“**Y**OU must not attach too much importance to my unusual faculty,” said the old priest to me some days later, when I was pressing him for other stories of his strange experiences. “There are times, even now, when I think the ‘direct speech’ is all imagination, a product of my highly strung nature acted upon by circumstances of an unusual kind.”

“That doesn’t seem to me sufficient explanation,” I answered; “besides, in the cases you have told me of, the circumstances were not specially unusual, at any rate not so far as you could tell before the event took place.”

“True,” said he, “but in a good many instances the circumstances were more out of the common, more calculated to excite the imagination and prepare it for self-deception. But I must own that, although at times I doubt if the whole thing be not subjective, still in the end I always come back to the opinion that such an explanation is quite inadequate. In fact, I only mentioned it because I thought you were inclined to take it all too seriously. For my part I refuse to attach any special meaning or value to the phenomena. I know that my account

of them is as truthful and exact as I can make it, and if you ask me for an explanation, all I have to say is that I seem to possess a certain kind of spiritual perception in an unusual degree; but it does not follow that what I hear is of any particular importance, any more than the possession of exceptionally long sight by one man would render a thing important, because he could see it while it was beyond the range of his companions' vision."

He paused for a few moments and I kept silent, hoping he might develop his views on the subject more fully, but instead he proposed to give me another instance of his curious gift.

"Let me tell you another story," he began, "one of the kind I mentioned just now, in which the circumstances themselves were calculated to excite the imagination." I begged him to do so, and he continued:

"While I was in Rome, at the Accademia, I became very intimate with one of my fellow-students. He was an Austrian and a member of one of the most ancient families in the empire, but if you do not mind I will not give you his name. We chanced to attend the same set of lectures, and the acquaintance thus begun ripened rapidly, so that we were soon on terms of real friendship, and in the vacation time we made several excursions together to various parts of Italy.

"He was ordained at the Advent Ordination, and



left Rome at once, so as to celebrate his first Mass at his old home, a famous castle in Austria, but before leaving, he made me promise that I would go and stay at his home for a little while on my return journey to England, after my own ordination. That event took place some three months later, on Holy Saturday, and a fortnight afterwards I left the Accademia and set my face homewards.

“The journey was a leisurely one, and it must have been the beginning of June when I crossed over the Brenner Pass and entered Austrian territory; but that done I went straight on to the station nearest my friend’s home. Even this place was twelve leagues away from the castle, but a diligence ran the rest of the way, and I took a seat in it, glad to be quit of the train. I put up for the night at an inn where the diligence had stopped about an hour before sunset.

“After taking my room and arranging for supper, I walked across the way to see the parish priest and get permission to say Mass next morning. The good man proved to be very unwell, but on learning from his housekeeper that a strange priest wished to say Mass next day, he sent down a message begging me to come upstairs and see him. I found him in bed, apparently suffering from fever, but he assured me that my coming was as good as medicine to him.

“‘It is certainly our holy Mother who has sent

you,' he exclaimed, ' for to-morrow is a feast day with us, and it would be dreadful if there were no Mass in the church; yet the Herr Doctor has forbidden me to attempt it. Now you are here and will say Mass for my good people, will you not ?'

"Of course I said that I would do anything I could, and he explained that he had special permission from the bishop of the diocese to grant faculties to any priest who came to help him during his illness, so that I could hear confessions if anyone wished to go.

"By the time I left him it was quite dark, and my dinner was waiting for me. Soon after ten o'clock, when I was just thinking of going to bed, a knock came at the door and the landlord entered.

" ' Your pardon, Herr Priest,' said he, ' but there is a gentleman below who wishes to speak with you.'

" ' Impossible,' I exclaimed; ' there must be some mistake; I do not know anyone in the neighbourhood.'

" ' But it is true, mein Herr,' replied the man, ' the Pastor, so he says, told him to come across and ask for you.'

" ' That is another matter, of course,' said I; ' I will come down with you,' and we went together to the large room on the ground-floor where I had dined.

"At the door the landlord bowed me in before him and then retired, leaving me alone with a tall,



distinguished-looking stranger. He was obviously an Austrian noble, but to my surprise he addressed me in excellent English: put shortly, his story was this. He was Count A——, who lived with his younger brother at their family castle, some leagues distant. Neither his brother nor himself were what could be called devout Catholics, and, moreover, they had quarrelled with the local priest. The previous evening his brother had been taken seriously ill, and now wished to see a priest. He had, therefore, come to the town himself to beg the Pastor to go back with him and see his brother, but as the good man was himself so unwell, this was impossible, and the only alternative seemed to be to come and appeal to me to go instead. He knew it was a very unusual thing to ask of a stranger on a journey, but his brother was dying, of that the doctor left no doubt, and his soul was in danger. I was a priest and, he understood, an English noble. He begged I would not refuse his appeal.

“It was certainly a most inconvenient occurrence, and my first impulse was to refuse, or rather to point out difficulties which made my acquiescence impossible. I was a stranger, had no faculties, was on a journey, and must be off by to-morrow’s diligence, had promised to say Mass for the Pastor next morning, and anything else I could think of in the way of objections. The Count waited until I had finished, and then said quietly, ‘My

Father, it is a question of saving a soul, surely you cannot refuse?’

“I was silent for a moment, wondering what I ought to do, and then, as if in answer, I heard a voice whispering in my ear say ‘Go.’ I looked up quickly at the Count, wondering if he had spoken, and he began to plead with me once more. ‘Go with him,’ came the voice again in my ears. It could not be the Count, for he was speaking at the moment; and I felt somehow convinced that my duty was to go. Just as he paused the voice came again as if to reassure me, ‘Go without doubting, for I am with thee,’ and half dazed I said to him, ‘Yes, I will go.’

“As we went through the hall to the door of the inn I chanced to look at the clock. It was just half-past ten, and I remember thinking to myself, ‘I shall not get to bed before midnight at the earliest.’ At the door stood a carriage, its four horses restlessly pawing the ground, and anxious to be on the move. As the Count opened the door and motioned to me to enter, I stopped in surprise. ‘Surely,’ I said, ‘you wish me to bring the blessed Sacrament. I must go over to the church and obtain it.’

“‘No, no,’ said he, somewhat nervously, I thought; ‘we must not delay even for that. You understand, it is unlikely my brother will be in a condition to receive Communion.’

"Amazed at this, I began to expostulate with him—what good could I do compared with what our Lord would do in the Holy Viaticum? But even as I spoke the voice came again in my ears, 'Go at once, delay no longer,' and alarmed I stepped into the carriage.

"With a look of relief my companion called out an order to the driver and stepped in after me, the horses at once starting off at a great pace. The carriage was of the old-fashioned, travelling type quite unknown nowadays, with deep comfortable seats, and curtains to the windows. My companion was proceeding to close the windows and draw the curtains, and it was only after some difficulty that I got him to leave the window on my side a little open, with its curtain not drawn. This gave me some fresh air, but the night was very dark, and there was a candle alight in a swinging candlestick within the carriage, so that I could make out nothing of the country through which we were passing.

"I felt some anxiety about the Mass I had promised to say for the Pastor next morning, and asked the Count how far it was to his castle, and at what time I could get back. 'Several leagues,' was all I got out of him as, ignoring my second question, he lay back in the carriage and closed his eyes as if tired out. Then all at once it struck me that I was behaving very selfishly. The poor man's only brother was dying, and here was I worrying him

about needless details; so I too kept silence, and taking my rosary from my pocket, leaned back in my seat and closed my eyes.

“ I think I must have fallen into a doze, for I had no idea how long we had been driving, when I was suddenly awakened by the noise of the horses’ hoofs striking loudly on a wooden bridge. I sat up abruptly and looked out of the window. The moon must have risen by now, for I could see quite plainly, as we passed under an arched gateway and halted in a stone-paved courtyard.

“ The castle loomed up, huge and uncertain in the dim light, the buttresses casting deep shadows across the walls that stood out white in the moonlight. But I had no time to survey the building, for Count A—— quickly alighted and helped me out of the carriage. Before us, at an open door, stood a man-servant holding a lantern, and I was hurried in, through an outer room and across a huge hall, into a smaller one fitted as a library with dark carved bookcases, and a bright log fire in a deep, old-fashioned fireplace. Here the Count stopped, begging me to warm myself—though the night was not cold—and to take a glass of wine, while he went to find out if his brother was able and ready to see me. As I was uncertain of the time I took no wine, since I had to say Mass in the morning, but stood by the fire, glad to stretch my limbs after the long drive. Not more than two or three minutes elapsed

before a servant entered with a message from Count A——, begging me to go with the messenger, who would show the way to his brother's room, where all was ready for me.

“ I went at once, preceded by the servant with a light. We went down a long corridor and up some stairs, but I took no special notice of the way, and cannot say if we had ascended one flight or two, when we finally passed through a ‘ passage-room,’ and stopped at a door before which there hung a deep red curtain. Drawing this aside my guide knocked at the door, and a voice within answered clearly in German. The servant then opened the door and stepped back, holding the red portière aside for me to enter. As I did so the door was shut behind me, and I heard a dull thud as the weighted curtain fell back into position behind it.

“ Now all this, no doubt, sounds very ordinary and natural, but somehow I had a growing feeling that something was wrong. The non-return of Count A—— to the library, the deserted condition of the whole place, the absence of anything suggesting illness, no sign of doctor, nurse, etc., had surprised me, and my feeling of uneasiness was increased enormously by what I now saw. I found myself in a room, not a bedroom as I had expected, but a large apartment panelled in oak or some dark wood, with a heavily carved cornice and elaborate plaster ceiling decorated in gold and colour. Some

handsome old-fashioned chairs were ranged stiffly along the walls, which bore several portraits; a wood fire burned in the deep, open fireplace, above which was a lofty overmantel reaching to the ceiling and carved with classic figures. In the centre of the room stood a large table, with a litter of playing-cards and a dice box on it, beside some lighted candles in tall silver candlesticks. Beyond this was seated a young man, not more than twenty-five years old at most, and apparently in perfect health.

“He looked up quickly as I entered, but said nothing, and with some hesitation I began to apologize, as best I could in German, for intruding upon him. The servant must have made some mistake. I was a priest, a stranger, and had been brought in great haste to see the brother of Count A—— who was ill—in fact, was not expected to live till morning. At this the young man rose and came towards me.

“‘There is no mistake, my Father,’ he said, speaking in German, ‘it is I whom you were brought to see; I shall be a dead man before sunrise.’

“At this my previous misgivings were increased a hundredfold, and I felt thoroughly alarmed; my fears being oddly coupled with annoyance at the way I had been tricked. Crushing down the angry words which were rushing up for utterance, I repeated as calmly as I could that there was evidently some mistake. That Count A—— had told me definitely that my services as a priest were needed



by his brother, who was very seriously ill and not likely to live till morning; whereas he appeared to be perfectly well. The stranger waited in silence until I had finished.

“ ‘ It is not to be wondered at,’ said he, ‘ that you are surprised and annoyed; indeed, the Count seems to have misled you in some details, but the main fact is perfectly true. I am his brother, I shall be dead before morning, and it is to hear my confession that we have brought you all this long journey. You will not refuse me, surely, now that you have come ?’

“ My first inclination was to protest angrily against the way I had been treated, when the recollection of the voice I had heard at the inn came back to my mind. After all it was not the Count’s story which had brought me, but the strange command, three times repeated, and I was as sure as ever that Count A—— had not spoken the words which impelled me to go with him.

“ Taking my silence for consent the young man motioned me to a recess, apparently a window but with shutters drawn, in which there stood a *prie-dieu* with a chair beside it. Almost unconsciously I obeyed his gesture, walking beside him to the *prie-dieu*, where he kneeled down as I seated myself at his side. Even now I am not clear if I did wrong in hearing his confession, and you will understand I had to decide without any time for deliberation. I had been a priest for a few weeks only, and had

not heard a dozen confessions in all. The Pastor certainly had given me faculties, and Count A—— had mentioned that his castle was in the same diocese when I raised this point as an obstacle to my coming. Then too there was the memory of the voice I had heard, commanding me to go without fear. Automatically I gave the stranger my blessing, and he began his confession.

“What he told me, under the seal, I cannot, of course, repeat to you—indeed, I scarcely understood it all myself, what with the turmoil in my mind and the strange language, for my knowledge of German was, and is, far from perfect. But this I may say, that no sufficient explanation of his position was offered, nor did my questions elicit anything more than that his death before morning was quite certain and utterly unavoidable, and that he desired most earnestly to make his peace with God before he should stand at his judgement seat. In the end I abandoned all efforts to break down his reserve, and with many misgivings imparted absolution. As I finished he rose and thanked me, adding in the most earnest manner, ‘Let me beg you, my Father, not to inquire further into this matter. No harm whatever will come to you, and no inquiries you may make will bring you any nearer its solution.’ With that he rang a small hand bell, which stood upon the table, and the servant who had brought me to the room appeared almost immediately.



“ I tried to speak, but not a word would come; indeed, my one idea was to escape, for I was rapidly becoming unnerved. Accordingly I allowed myself to be conducted from the room, through the ante-chamber and down a flight of stairs, where the servant showed me into a room which I had not entered before. Here he left me, saying that Count A—— would be with me very shortly. Left to myself, my mind ran riot as to the meaning of the strange adventure I had just gone through. Doubts if I had done right in hearing the confession and giving absolution, mingled with vague notions of a secret society, and, I must own, no small amount of fear for my own safety. All at once the last prevailed, and I ran quickly to the window and opened it, thinking I might perhaps escape unnoticed.

“ The casement opened inwards, and outside were strong iron bars fixed in the masonry, which prevented my leaning out of it, much less climbing through the opening. However, the cool night air revived and calmed me, and I stood looking out into the moonlight. Below was the castle moat, still as glass and reflecting the cold, silvery light, save where the dark shadow of the building fell across it. This shadow stopped in a hard, straight line some few yards to the right of the window, showing me that my room was near a corner of the building; and I found that, by pressing my face against the bars, I could just see the angle of the retaining

wall which formed the outer side of the moat as it too turned round the corner.

“ I do not suppose I had stood there more than four or five minutes, when I heard the noise of a window being opened somewhere overhead, and apparently round the corner of the building. I listened intently, and could just catch the sound of a voice speaking in a rapid low tone, as if giving some directions; and then, to my amazement, there came a sound like something falling, followed by a loud splash in the moat beneath. My heart was in my mouth, but not another sound came. Then, a few seconds later, a series of little waves broke the calm surface of the water, as they flowed round the angle of the wall. Soon they shrank into mere rings, and in a minute or two the moat was a mirror once more. I gazed, fascinated, until the last of the rings disappeared, and then the thirst for safety seized me again. I closed the window and walked quickly to the door. Opening it I found the servant who had brought me there standing, as if listening, at the foot of the stairs. I called to him in German, saying I could wait no longer, but must return at once whence I had come.

“ ‘ But surely the Herr Priest will wait and see my master the Count ? ’ asked the man in some surprise.

“ ‘ No, no, ’ I said, ‘ I must get back immediately; I have to say Mass for the people to-morrow morning. ’

“ ‘ It is *this* morning now, mein Herr,’ replied the man, ‘ and indeed if that is so, you will need to start at once, if you wish to get any sleep at all;’ and he led the way downstairs, going before me with a light.

“ We crossed the same large hall and ante-chamber, and the man opened the door into the courtyard. To my relief the carriage was waiting at the door, so, telling him to make my excuses to his master, I entered it and drove off with a feeling of intense relief. The drive back must have taken a full hour or more, and I was surprised to find the innkeeper waiting for me on my arrival. As I passed upstairs I looked at the clock again; it was ten minutes to two ! Fortunately the Mass was to be at a fairly late hour, as it was a feast day, but it seemed as if I had scarcely slept at all, when I was awakened and told it was half-past eight.

“ After the Mass, when I returned to the inn, I found to my surprise that there was a letter waiting for me. It was from my friend, telling me that he had been called to Vienna, where his mother was lying ill, but begging me to go on to his home all the same, where he would join me as soon as he could leave his mother. Of course I did nothing of the kind, but came straight home to England; and it was some years before we met by chance in Rome, when I told him my strange experience. He made me give him every detail I could remember about the

buildings and everything connected with the place, and then said, 'There is one castle in the neighbourhood and one only which fits in with your description,' and he named a place I had never heard of.

" 'And its owner,' I asked, 'who is he?' The name was as strange to me as that of the castle, but the answer to my next question was significant.

" 'What sort of a man is he?' I asked, and my friend hesitated a little before replying.

" 'Well,' said he at length, 'I scarcely know; he is quite a recluse nowadays—in fact, I have only seen him once. People say that he was very wild in his youth, and the story goes that he quarrelled with his younger brother about a beautiful peasant girl who lived in the neighbourhood. He is supposed to have circulated a false report that she was dead, and a few days later his brother was found drowned in the castle moat. The official view was that he had committed suicide, but many people suspected foul play, though no evidence of it was ever forthcoming. It must be ten years now since the affair took place, and it is becoming a mere legend even in the neighbourhood. All the same, if I were you, I should not publish your story in Austria, at any rate so long as the Count is living.' "

## THE PRIEST'S HIDING PLACE

**I**T was clear that the rain would not stop before nightfall, so after lunch the old squire proposed that we should take our exercise in the long gallery, as the walk which we had planned to an outlying farm was impossible. The gallery is on the second floor, and runs the whole length of the west wing. At each end is a deep oriel window, and smaller windows look out westwards. Opposite these the oak panelling continues without a break the whole length of the wall, except for a door, near either end, where the north and south wings join on. Along this wall hangs a series of portraits, which, though less important from an artistic point of view than those in the reception rooms below, are still full of value for anyone interested in the history of the family. We walked the whole length of the gallery once or twice, and then the old priest stopped in front of one of the pictures.

"Did I ever tell you how I found this portrait?" he asked, pointing to the effigy of an ecclesiastic dressed in black.

"No," I answered; "was it not here when you came into the property?"

"Well, yes," said he, "it was here, but hidden

away in a lumber room, almost black with dirt, and without a frame or anything to show whom it represented. I sometimes wondered what the picture was like, so one day I sent it up to London, and had it carefully cleaned on the chance that it might prove of interest. The result surpassed all my hopes, for the cleaning revealed the inscription you see near the top of the painting, to the right of the head; can you decipher it?"

I had not noticed the inscription before, and now tried to read the letters, but could make nothing intelligible of them.

"What is it?" I asked at length. "It looks to me like '*Effigies V. PHIL. de FLUM. M. ob TIB. 1621*,'" and I spelt it out letter by letter.

"Capital!" exclaimed the old man; "and can't you fill in the abbreviations?"

"I suppose the '*V.*' stands for '*vera*' to agree with '*effigies*,'" I answered, "but I'm afraid the rest is beyond me."

"It might be that," said he, "but for my part I read it as '*Effigies Venerabilis Philippi de Fluminibus, Martyris, Obiit Tiburniæ, 1621.*'"

"*Philippi de Fluminibus*," I cried, my interest now thoroughly aroused; "then it is a portrait of the Venerable Philip Rivers, the martyr priest of the family!"

"Ah, I thought you would be interested in it," said my old cousin, with a smile of satisfaction.



"You can imagine my delight when it came back from being cleaned, and I read the inscription for the first time, for it had been quite invisible under the varnish and dirt."

"And now I understand the carving of the frame," said I, for the design of palms and knives, interlaced with a rope, had puzzled me, "but I wonder who hid it away in the lumber room, and why?"

"I fancy it was my grandfather," said the old squire. "He was your great-grandfather, of course, the one who took the name of Pater. You know that he ceased to practise his religion, and married a Protestant when quite an elderly man. I imagine the mute reproach of his martyred ancestor's portrait was too much for him, so he took it down and put it away out of sight. His wife was many years his junior, but she died when their second child was born. That child was your grandfather, and the elder son was my father. However, they were left orphans while still very young, so they could have known nothing about the picture, though my father would have valued it had he known, as the children were brought up Catholics, thank God."

"What a lucky thing you thought of having the picture cleaned!" I said. "It would have been lamentable if it had been thrown away or burned as worthless. I have always had a devotion to the Venerable Philip Rivers."

"I should think so," interrupted the old priest;



"you would not deserve to have such an ancestor in your pedigree if you hadn't a devotion to him; but you haven't heard his Mass as I have !"

"Heard his Mass," I exclaimed in surprise, "what do you mean ?"

"Well, I suppose I have let myself in for a story now," he answered with a smile; "come and sit down in the oriel, and you shall hear it." So we walked to the window seat at the end of the gallery, and after a minute's rest he began.

"In the first years after my ordination I used to give a good number of missions and retreats, especially in Lancashire and the North, and at the time of my story I had undertaken to preach a Mission, at a church in Glasgow, during Advent. I had arranged to get to my destination two days before the Mission was to begin, which proved to be lucky, for, as you will hear, I was delayed on the way. In those days the train service was not nearly so good as it is now, and I had to leave here before dusk, and change twice *en route*, so as to catch the night mail for Scotland at Stafford.

"I was due at Stafford about half-past nine at night, the Scottish mail coming in soon afterwards, but some twenty miles this side of Stafford an accident occurred to my train. If I remember right it was an axle that broke, but anyhow the coach next to the engine left the rails, and dragged the two adjoining carriages with it. Luckily we were going

slow at the time, as we were quite close to a small station, so the rear part of the train in which I was came to no harm. But the line was blocked by the damaged coaches, and it was impossible for us to get on in time to make the connection at Stafford.

“Fortunately no one was killed in the accident, but several passengers were injured more or less severely, and these were conveyed to the village inn, which was filled to its utmost limit. I did not feel inclined to spend the night in a railway carriage or in the bare station waiting-room, so I tried various houses in the village in the hope of finding a bed for the night. After two or three unsuccessful attempts a young woman, who appeared in answer to my knock, caught sight of my collar, and asked if I were not a Catholic priest. I answered ‘Yes,’ and she then advised me to go and apply at the Manor Farm. ‘It is not far by the path there,’ she said, pointing to a stile in the hedge, ‘and the farmer’s family are good Catholics, who will be glad to take you in for the night. It is a big house, and they have a spare room furnished.’

“The suggestion seemed a good one, so I thanked her and set off with my handbag along the path in question. There was a bright moon, and I had no difficulty about the path, though the distance proved further than I had expected, for I must have walked quite half a mile before reaching the farm. However, on telling my story I received such a warm

welcome from the farmer and his wife that I was very glad I had come.

“The building was quite an imposing one, and had evidently been an old manor house, as its name implied; but my good host could tell me little of its history. It appeared that the owner was an elderly gentleman, a Catholic, who lived at a distance, and dealt with his tenants through an agent. The latter had instructions always to secure Catholic tenants if possible, and, in the case of the Manor Farm, there had not been a Protestant tenant within living memory. The only other detail I gathered was that the old house was said to contain a ‘priest’s hole,’ or secret hiding place. However, no one knew where it was, and the farmer himself believed that, if such a thing had ever existed, it must have been in the older wing, which had been pulled down some twenty-five years earlier, as it was in a ruinous state, and the house was more than large enough without it. This much I learned in conversation during supper, which the farmer’s wife provided for me, and, as soon as it was over, I asked to be shown to my room, as I could see the good folk were themselves anxious to retire.

“The spare room proved to be an attic chamber on the second floor. It was a long, low room, with oak rafters showing through the plaster ceiling, and panelled along one side and at each end. On the other side the ceiling sloped down almost to the

floor level, except where two broad dormer windows cut into the angle of the roof. The door was at one end of the room, and on the long wall opposite the windows was a broad projection, which I took to be the upper part of a chimney stack, standing out some three feet into the room. The bed stood at the far end, its head screened off by the projection, and I noticed that, in spite of the convenient chimney stack, there was no fireplace in the room. The bed had been made up for me while I was at supper, so my host and his wife excused themselves and retired. I had said all my Office for the day in the train, and was feeling very tired, so I decided to go to bed at once, and after saying a few prayers I undressed and got into the bed, which proved to be extremely comfortable.

“I must have slept for several hours when I awoke abruptly, convinced that someone had just called me by name, ‘Philip—Philip Rivers’; I was sure of it. You have noticed, no doubt, how one’s own name will arrest the attention even in the midst of a babel of conversation. Well, it was like that, only, instead of catching my attention among a crowd of talkers, the name had called me back to consciousness out of sleep.

“I sat up in bed and listened, and as I did so the thought struck me, ‘How could anyone here know what my Christian name is?’ I had introduced myself as Father Pater, and though the label on

my bag read 'Rev. P. R. Pater,' there was nothing to show that the initials stood for 'Philip Rivers'; so I determined to wait and see if the call would be repeated before I answered it. I lay back in bed and waited, but nothing happened, and I began to think I had been dreaming. Still the sensation had been wonderfully vivid, and I could hardly believe it was all imagination. Then, as I lay there, I heard a voice speaking in a low tone, almost a whisper. There was no doubt about it now, it was in the room not many feet away from me, though I could see nothing.

"I was on the point of calling out to ask who was there, when I caught the word 'Mass' and a moment later 'pursuivants.' At this I felt sure the voices were not those of the farmer and his wife, as I had first supposed, and I lay as still as possible, scarcely breathing, so as to hear anything else that followed. For some minutes all was silent, and I could feel my heart beating strongly as I listened to catch the lightest sound. Then quite distinctly, in a low clear voice, came the words, '*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen. Introibo ad altare Dei.*'

"The surprise was overwhelming, and, even if I had wished to speak, I was dumb with astonishment; but somehow all sense of fear left me as the voice proceeded calmly with the opening responses of the Mass. One's mind works oddly on occasions

of exceptional activity, and I remember a feeling of annoyance that the answers of the server were indistinct and almost inaudible, but half-unconsciously I repeated in my mind the words of the Mass as I heard them.

"All at once came another surprise. The unknown priest was saying the *Confiteor*, and had got to '*Sanctis Apostolis Petro et Paulo*,' and in my mind I was going on to '*omnibus Sanctis*,' when the voice inserted the extra words, '*beato patri nostro Benedicto*,' which of course are said only by members of St. Benedict's Order.'

"'So you are a Benedictine monk,' I thought to myself; 'that narrows down the possibilities enormously, and ought to help me to identify you,' but I gave no more thought to the point, as I wished to concentrate my whole mind on the task of listening.

"Soon there came a pause, just where the silent prayers would come as the priest advances to the altar, and then again the voice began, quite distinctly, reading the Introit. '*Ad te levavi animam meam : Deus meus, in te confido, non erubescam ; neque irrideant me inimici mei*\* . . . and I recognized it at once as the Mass for the first Sunday of Advent.

\* "To thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul : in thee do I put my trust, let me not be put to confusion, neither let my enemies laugh me to scorn. . . ."



“I need not weary you with details, but as I lay there I heard the whole Mass proceed, every word of the ‘proper’ full of significance to those who lived under the terrors of the penal laws, for I now felt sure that it was such a Mass that I was hearing.

“At the consecration came the tinkle of a tiny bell, and later on two or three persons received Communion. Then came the Post-communion and the concluding prayer, against the persecutors of the Church: ‘O Lord our God, we beseech thee, leave not exposed to the perils of this human life those whom thou hast rejoiced by a share in this divine mystery.’ The Blessing was given in due course, and the first words of the last Gospel followed. But then, suddenly, from below the windows, there came a sharp whistle, thrice repeated, and the last Gospel stopped abruptly. I heard a rapid whispering, but could distinguish nothing of what was said, and in a few moments there was perfect silence; nor did I hear another sound, though I lay awake until I was called.

“At breakfast I asked the farmer once more about the ‘priest’s hiding place,’ but without result; I did, however, learn one point of interest. I had noticed at the station, the previous night, that the village was named Codsall, and so concluded that the Manor Farm had formerly been Codsall Manor. Inadvertently I referred to it by that name, and the



farmer corrected me, explaining that it was in a different parish to Codsall, and had been known as Marston Manor.

“The name seemed curiously familiar somehow, but I could not fix it, and soon after breakfast I left the place to continue my journey north. But before leaving I made a note of the name and address of the agent, meaning to write and ask for any particulars he could give me about the farm, in case they might cast some light on my experience of the night before. The journey to Glasgow was without incident, but all the way I was thinking over the affair, and trying to recollect why the name of Marston Manor was familiar. I felt convinced that what I had heard was, so to speak, the echo of a Mass celebrated in the penal times, perhaps by some priest who was afterwards martyred; and not unnaturally my thoughts turned to my namesake, the Venerable Philip Rivers. Then, in a flash, it occurred to my mind that in his trial the evidence which sealed his fate was that of a servant, who admitted under torture that Rivers had said Mass at Marston Manor, in Staffordshire, the very day he was captured, which was Advent Sunday, 1621.

“When I got to Glasgow I borrowed a copy of Challoner’s *Missionary Priests*, and read his account of Father Rivers, where the facts I have just told you are fully set out. One other detail was mentioned that in 1621 Advent Sunday fell on November 29th,

the exact date on which I had slept at the Manor Farm.

“I could do nothing more during my stay in Glasgow except write to the agent, and ask if I might be permitted to examine the old house carefully on my return south; giving my connection with Father Rivers as a reason for my interest in the place, but saying nothing of the incident of the Mass. In reply he wrote me a most hospitable letter, begging me to stay with him on my journey home, and adding that, as he was himself keenly interested in the history of the neighbourhood, he would be delighted to give me all the help he could in my researches. I accepted his invitation gladly, and when the Mission was over, once more turned my steps to Codsall. This time the journey proved uneventful, and I reached the agent’s house about dusk on a December evening. My host was an elderly man, well read and cultured, with a knowledge of local history which filled me with admiration, and we soon became excellent friends.

“He told me a good deal about the history of Marston Manor, and how it had fallen on evil days and come to be a farm house, and he promised to show me the spot in the neighbouring wood where, according to tradition, Father Philip Rivers had been captured, while trying to effect his escape on the fatal Advent Sunday. I felt very much inclined to tell him about my experience on the night when

I had slept at Marston, but eventually decided to keep silent for the moment, and instead expressed my desire to make a thorough examination of the old house on the following day.

“ ‘ I was sure you would wish that,’ said the agent, very kindly, ‘ so I have arranged for the estate carpenter to meet us there to-morrow morning. He has done the repairs at Marston for many years now, and if anyone can cast any light on the whereabouts of the priest’s hiding place, it will be he.’

“ Next morning, soon after breakfast, we set off together to the Manor Farm, and on our arrival found the estate carpenter waiting for us. I talked to him about the building for some time, and was interested in his account of the older wing, on the demolition of which he had himself worked, as a boy, some five-and-twenty years before. He was positive that nothing like a ‘ priest’s hole ’ had been found in it, and equally certain that he must have heard of it, had such a thing come to light at all. Moreover, he pointed out that the wing which had been destroyed had been built not later than the early Tudor period, while the existing wing dated from 1610, as recorded by a carved inscription over the entrance, and was therefore more likely to contain a hiding place, since it was built in the penal times when such a thing would be almost a necessity.

“ With this we entered the house, and made a tour of inspection, floor by floor, and so came at length to

the large attic room in which I had slept some ten days earlier. I remarked on the beauty of the old oak panelling, adding that it seemed odd such fine work should have been made for an attic.

“ ‘ I can’t help thinking it was brought here from somewhere else, sir,’ said the carpenter in reply.

“ ‘ But what makes you think that ?’ I asked, with interest.

“ ‘ Well, sir,’ said he, ‘ you will notice that the panels of the top row are square, while the rest are all a good deal longer than they are wide. If you look carefully you will see that some of the square panels have the grain running horizontally, while in the lower rows it is always vertical. Now you said yourself that the panelling was exceptionally good work, and so it is; which makes me think the men who made it would never have spoiled the run of the grain by setting some of the top panels on their sides. But if the whole lot was brought from somewhere else, and the top row cut down to fit a lower room, then, like enough, the people who altered such fine work wouldn’t take too much trouble about it, and so might get some of the panels in sideways when they put ’em together after cutting down.

“ ‘ Well, that comes of being an expert,’ said I; ‘ even if I had noticed the blemish I should never have gathered so much from it. But one thing did strike me as odd when I slept here, and that is the absence of any fireplace, when the chimney stack was

here at hand sticking out into the room like this,' and I laid my hand on the projection of which I told you before.

" 'Perhaps they thought it too near the rafters to be safe,' said the agent; 'but stop a moment, is this the chimney stack? I thought the chimney was in the gable at the end of this room, not here in the middle. Isn't that so, Bateman?' he asked, turning to the carpenter.

" 'Yes, sir,' said the man, after a moment's thought; 'there is no chimney stack near this part of the room.'

" 'Come, this is interesting,' said I; 'but if this is not a chimney stack, why is there a projection here at all? They wouldn't have brought the panelling out like this unless there were something behind.'

" While I was speaking the carpenter had been looking up at the cornice of the panelling, and then he moved the table up against the projection and climbed upon it, so that he could easily reach the ceiling.

" 'Why, sir,' he said a moment later, 'there is quite a space between the top of the woodwork and the ceiling; see, I can put my hand right into the opening.'

" 'Can you feel any wall behind the woodwork?' asked the agent.

" 'No, sir,' replied the man, 'but wait a moment,'

and taking his rule from his pocket he unfolded it to the full length, and inserted the end through the opening, adding with surprise, 'Why, I can't find anything at all behind; there's a space more than two feet deep, at any rate.'

" 'Run your hand along the top of the cornice, Bateman,' said the agent, 'and see if the panelling is fastened to the ceiling in any way.'

"The carpenter did as he was ordered, without encountering any obstacle until he reached the angle, where the side of the projection met the front panelling, when his fingers struck against a support.

" 'There's something just at the end, sir,' said he; adding, as he withdrew his hand, 'Why, it's iron; look at the rust on my fingers, sir.'

" 'Light a match,' said the agent, 'and see if you can make out what it is.' The man did so, and peered into the narrow crevice.

" 'It looks like a hook, sir, holding all this front piece of panelling back to the sides. It must be nearly rusted through, I should say. May I break it, sir?'

" 'Try if you can do so without injuring the panelling,' said the agent, and the carpenter took a good grip of the cornice, and pulled it forcibly towards him.

"There was a sound of something snapping, and a lot of dust flew out, as the whole panelled front



of the projection moved outwards some inches at that end.

“ ‘ Stop,’ cried the agent, ‘ it’s holding at the other end, Bateman. See if you can get that loose too, without hurting the woodwork.’ ”

“ The carpenter jumped down and moved the table opposite the other end. ‘ There’s a hook here, as well,’ he reported; and this time he managed to push it back out of the eye in which it was fixed.

“ ‘ Just keep a hand on the panelling, sir, while I move the table away,’ cried Bateman; and when that was done the three of us lowered the whole panelled front of the projection to the floor, like the front of an old-fashioned *escritoire*.

“ The air was full of the dust we had dislodged, and at first it was difficult to see what was behind the opening. But the agent turned to me with a look of victory. ‘ I think, Father,’ he said, ‘ that we have discovered your ancestor’s hiding place !’ ”

“ There could be no doubt about it. The place was a typical ‘ priest’s hole,’ some eight feet by six. There were airholes in the floor and ceiling, as well as the long slit above the panelling we had let down. At one end was a long wooden seat, which could have been used as a bed, and opposite this was a small cupboard, rather over three feet high, which had evidently been used as an altar, for inside it we found two little wooden candlesticks, some rotten pieces of linen, and a single altar card, broken across.



“ Except for these things the place was absolutely empty, and it had evidently not been used for many years. But in one corner, just above the bed, there was a rough drawing of a crucifix; formed by blackening the plaster with the flame of a candle, and then scraping away the background. Beneath the drawing was the one word ‘*JHESU*,’ and the initials ‘*P. R.*’ ”

## DE PROFUNDIS

IT was some little time before the subject of the old priest's experiences cropped up again, and I did not like to refer to it deliberately for fear of trying his patience, and so making him avoid the matter entirely. One day, however, he mentioned it himself, and that gave me my opportunity.

"I want to ask you something about these events," I told him. "Have you yourself any theory to account for them at all?"

"*Distinguo*," said he, after a short pause; "without committing myself to a theory to fit every case, they do seem to me to fall into several classes.

"In one category I should place those 'voices' which warn me of events that have happened quite recently, or are actually happening at the moment, but a long distance away; such as the ones that told me of the deaths of my father and brother. Cases of this kind may, perhaps, be due to thought transference, or telepathy; as you yourself suggested, if you recollect, when I first told you of those instances.

"A second type are the 'voices' which order me to go to some place or do some special thing, which

I should probably have avoided if left to myself; and on these I have my own opinion, but, if you do not mind, I would rather keep it to myself.

“A third class are those experienced in certain places or in connection with certain articles; such as the story I told you of the Persecution Chalice, or of my hearing the last Mass of Father Philip Rivers the martyr. Such as these would fall into line with the cases we often hear of haunted houses. You know the modern theory of the subject, of course?”

“I’m not at all sure that I do,” I answered, “but, in any case, I should like you to explain it to me, and how it bears upon your own experiences.”

“Oh, well,” he replied, “the idea is just this; that a place or a thing, such as a weapon or article of furniture—almost anything, in fact, which has played a part in events that aroused very intense emotional activity on the part of those who enacted them—becomes itself saturated, as it were, with the emotions involved. So much so, in fact, that it can influence people of exceptional sympathetic powers, and enable them to perceive the original events, more or less perfectly, as if they were re-enacted before them. Thus, in some cases, the person will see the occurrence as if taking place before his eyes. In my case, I hear the words or sounds, just as if I were present on the original occasion, possibly some centuries before.”

"That is a new idea to me," I said, "but it doesn't seem impossible. Hitherto the only theory of haunting which ever seemed at all plausible to me was the old-fashioned one that the spirit of a guilty person was sometimes compelled, as part of its purgatory, to frequent the scene of its crime, and there re-enact the events which it now detested. Much in the same way as we hear of a murderer being irresistibly drawn to revisit the spot where he slew his victim, in spite of the evident danger he runs of arousing suspicion thereby."

"I see no reason why both theories should not be true," he answered; "some cases would demand one explanation, some another. In fact, if my experiences go to prove anything, they show that the theory you call 'old-fashioned' is at least as likely to be true as the one I outlined for you just now."

"I scent another story," I cried, "for none of those you have told me, as yet, suggested a soul in purgatory as the chief agent in the 'direct speech.'"

"If it comes to that," said he, with a smile, "I suppose I could give you half a dozen instances where such an explanation seems the most obvious and natural one. But, before we leave the question of explanations, is there anything else you would like to ask me about the subject?"

"Well, yes," said I, with some hesitation, "but if you think me impertinent or too inquisitive, please do not hesitate to say so. I would far

sooner drop the subject altogether, than run any risk of hurting your feelings."

"My dear boy," said the old priest, with more emotion than I had seen him exhibit hitherto, "please, please do not talk to me like that. God knows I am a poor enough specimen of what a priest should be, but heaven forbid that I should allow my feelings to block the way whereby you, or I, or any man, may come to understand the manner of his dealings with his creatures. I may fail, indeed I must fail to some degree, in making clear the truth in these matters; just as everyone who tries to express himself always fails to convey things to others as perfectly as he himself perceives them. But that is quite another thing from hiding the light that God reveals to me, in order to save my feelings from possible laceration."

"I am sorry, sir," said I, "I spoke foolishly; but I need not assure you that no such suggestion was intended by me, for a moment."

"I know, I know," he answered quickly, "but the point is one on which I feel strongly, more strongly than most men, perhaps; and you will humour an old man in it, will you not? But go on and ask the question which you had in mind."

"Well, sir," I said rather slowly, for his gentle outburst had distracted me from what I meant to say, "the point I wished to put to you was this.

With regard to these experiences of yours, does their occurrence, their frequency, or intensity, coincide with any special state, or set of circumstances, in yourself? I mean such things as physical health, spiritual fervour, intellectual activity or their opposites."

"Really, I don't know that I ever analyzed them in that way," he answered. "But, speaking generally, I should say that in the great majority of cases I have been in perfect health at the time, and certainly up to my normal standard of intellectual activity. As regards the spiritual atmosphere on such occasions, I have often remarked that events of this kind always seem to take place when my state of soul is absolutely calm and natural, and, consequently, when my sense perception and judgement are least likely to be deceived."

"Thank you, sir," I said, "that seems to me an important point, since for anyone who knows you personally it disposes of the idea that the whole thing may be self-deception. But you spoke just now of an instance, or possibly of half a dozen instances, where the 'voice' you heard seemed to be that of a soul in purgatory. Would you mind telling me of such a case?"

"I will do so with pleasure," said he, "and the story I will tell you has this further interest, that it is free from an objection you made once before; I mean, that so many of these events seem purpose-

less. In this case, as you will see in the sequel, what I heard was very much to the point.

“You may remember my telling you of an Austrian priest, a great friend of mine, to whose home I was travelling when I was obliged to undertake an extraordinary ‘sick call’; and how I next met my friend years later in Rome?” I nodded my acquiescence, and he continued, “Well, it was then that the event took place of which I propose to tell you. By that time my friend had become the head of one of the ecclesiastical colleges in Rome, and, at the personal request of the Austrian Emperor, he had been made a titular archbishop. As he was now a *personaggio distinto*, I felt a little doubtful about intruding on him, but he was so genuinely pleased when I did call that my fears all vanished, and we soon became as intimate as ever.

“One afternoon I had arranged to call for him soon after lunch, so that we might take a long walk together; but on my arrival he met me with apologies.

“‘I am sorry to upset our plan,’ he said, ‘but this morning I received a note from my sister, begging me to go and see her at once. She is a nun in one of the strictly enclosed convents here in Rome, and was solemnly professed only a few weeks ago, just before you came out from England. You have never met her, she is the youngest of the family and a good many years my junior.’



“Of course I said that the postponement of our excursion did not matter in the least, and proposed that I should walk with him to the convent. ‘I will wait in the church, during your interview,’ I said, ‘and afterwards we can take a stroll on the *Pincio*, if you are not kept too long.’ He fell in with the proposal at once, and we set out for the convent, which was quite at the other side of the city, fully half an hour’s walk from the college.

“On our arrival the out-sister conducted us both to the parlour, when I explained that I would wait in the church, while the archbishop spoke with his sister. The nun then said that she was the sacristan, and would take me to the church through the sacristy, as that was the shortest way. Accordingly, we left the archbishop, and, crossing the passage, passed through a doorway inscribed ‘*Sagrestia*.’

“‘But what a large, handsome sacristy,’ I exclaimed in Italian, for I had not expected anything on such a big scale. ‘*Si, Signore*,’ answered the nun, evidently pleased at my surprise; and she explained how, some years before, the nuns had converted the upper portion of one transept into a new choir for themselves, and the lower half had then become the sacristy. ‘See,’ she added, ‘the old pavement is still here,’ and she pointed to a number of incised slabs in the floor which marked the site of old interments. Then she opened another

door and I passed into the church, asking her to let me know when the archbishop was ready.

“The building was a typical Roman church of the seventeenth century; a nave with small side chapels off it, but no aisles, a low dome at the crossing of nave and transepts, and a shallow apsidal sanctuary. A short inspection of the interior revealed nothing of special interest, so I soon settled down in a quiet corner of the transept opposite the sacristy door and said a few prayers. After some minutes I rose from my knees and sat down on a bench at the side, chancing as I did so to glance at the windows of the nuns’ choir, high up in the opposite transept.

“The windows were filled with glass, frosted in some way to prevent one seeing through, but the strong light behind cast the shadow of a kneeling nun across the window as she prayed with her face towards the Blessed Sacrament, which was reserved on the High Altar of the church below. Vaguely I wondered who she was and for what she was praying, and then the figure rose and moved to one side. The silhouette was in profile now, so evidently she was kneeling before some shrine or picture which stood in the choretto itself, at the side of the window.

“I think I have mentioned that, in some cases, when the ‘direct speech’ comes to me it is heralded by a kind of premonition in myself. Gradually I

become less and less perceptive of the things around me, a feeling of bodily fatigue and a sense of muscular lassitude grows upon me, while my mind becomes unusually alert. Then, out of this—physical insulation, may I call it?—a kind of sympathetic union seems to arise between myself and the unknown person, and, finally, the ‘direct speech’ is heard. It was so in this case, as I gazed up at the figure of the nun who knelt and prayed before the shrine. Then, as from sheer fatigue I closed my eyes, abruptly in my ears came the voice of someone speaking, speaking rapidly, in Italian, with piteous tense accents, as if in extreme pain and distress.

“‘No, no, no—do not ask *me* to pray for you. It is all wrong, I say; terribly wrong. A saint! My God, it is I who need your prayers. Oh, why do not they pray for me, that I may rest in peace? O my God, I am punished indeed. Punished for my folly, my pretences, my hypocrisy. Oh, do not pray to me, pray *for* me. Pray, pray for me, the wretchedest of sinners. Oh, pray for me, that God may grant me rest.’

“This went on for some minutes, the distress of the speaker becoming more intense, as if her protests went unheeded by those to whom she spoke. Then, all at once, came silence, and, opening my eyes, I looked up at the tribune. For a moment the shadow of the nun’s figure fell across the window, and then

she moved away, her prayers completed, and I heard no more.

“With a sense of great relief I came back to myself again, and for some minutes sat pondering over what I had heard. What could it all mean? Something was wrong inside the convent, I felt certain, but before I had got my thoughts clear, the Sister Sacristan returned and told me that the archbishop had left the parlour, and was waiting for me in the vestibule.

“I got up at once, and joining my companion, we left the convent together. My mind was still full of the words I had heard, and of speculation about their meaning, and we must have walked a considerable distance without either of us speaking. All at once it struck me that I was neglecting my friend, and I glanced towards him, with some trifle of small talk on my lips. To my surprise his face was set and stern, with tense lips and frowning eyes, and, as I thought, an expression half puzzled and half angry. At this the trifle I had meant to say fled from my mind, and instead of it I blurted out abruptly:

“‘Something *is* wrong, then, in the convent, as I fancied?’ With a look of surprise the archbishop turned his gaze full upon me, and I felt that I had given myself away.

“‘Explain yourself, friend Philip,’ he said at length.

“ ‘ Oh, well ! ’ I answered, as lightly as I was able, ‘ it is easy to see that something has upset you, and in any case your sister would not have sent you such an urgent message, unless she had some reason for it. ’

“ ‘ That is not good enough, my friend, ’ he answered gently. ‘ You spoke as if my expression of annoyance had confirmed a suspicion of your own. There is something behind those words of yours, Philip; something which it may be important for me to know. See now, I will be quite frank with you. I left the convent, disturbed and mystified by something which had just been said to me, and your first words show that you too have been affected in the same way. My dear Philip, you must tell me the cause of your anxiety, and then, in my turn, I will tell you what is troubling me. ’

“ ‘ Well, if you must know, ’ I said, ‘ while you were in the convent, I went into the church, and, after a few prayers, I sat down and fell into a reverie; ’ and then I told him all I have just told you, and how the words I heard had left me worried and anxious. The archbishop listened to my story in silence, and I was half afraid he would laugh at me, but at its close he seemed more serious than ever.

“ ‘ It is a strange experience, ’ he said, when I had finished, ‘ I don’t know that I envy you your curious faculty. But now I must tell you what is troubling me. When you left me to go to the church

I waited in the parlour; a plain bare room with a double grille across the centre, and two or three chairs on either side of it. I sat down, and after a little while my sister came in, accompanied by one of the elder nuns—you know their rule forbids them to see a visitor alone. We talked for some time in Italian, for my sister mentioned that the other did not understand German well, but nothing was mentioned which explained why she had sent for me, and I hesitated to ask her in the presence of her companion. It struck me, however, that she seemed ill at ease, and, luckily, an opportunity arose which gave me a few words with her alone.

“ ‘I had inquired after the Reverend Mother, and the elder nun asked if I would like to see her. I said “Yes,” and she rose and went out, saying she would go and call her to the parlour. Immediately we were alone my sister said to me, “Sigismund, for God’s sake go to the Holy Father and get permission to make a visitation of the convent.” Astonished at her vehemence I answered, “My dear sister, whatever is the matter?” “I cannot tell you,” she replied, “for I am sworn to secrecy; but if you make a visitation I think you may find out for yourself.”

“ ‘Just at that moment the other nun returned with the Reverend Mother, so I could not ask her any more questions. You will imagine I felt in no mood for further conversation, so I simply told the Superioress that I did not wish to leave without



seeing her, and after a few minutes' conversation I gave them my blessing and left. Now my sister is a strong-minded woman, and I am convinced she would not have spoken as she did without good reason; and your curious experience makes me still more determined to look into the matter carefully.'

"He stopped speaking, and we walked on in silence for some little time, and then I asked him, 'How do you propose to proceed in the affair?'

" 'Well,' he answered, 'I shall begin by going to the Vicariate, where I have a friend who is one of the secretaries to the Cardinal Vicar, and who has charge of the archives. If there is anything out of the common in the past history of the convent, he will be able to tell me. Then I shall ask for an audience with the Cardinal Vicar himself, and tell him the whole story. I have very little doubt that he will empower me to enter the enclosure and inspect the convent as his deputy, or else will appoint some discreet person to do so. If he is not prepared to take any action at all, I shall go to the Holy Father himself, and ask his permission to make a visitation in person. In the interval I will ask you to keep the whole affair a secret. I shall probably know more in a day or two, and then I will tell you how I have got on.' By this time we had reached the college again, and I said good-bye at the door, as the archbishop was evidently disinclined for further conversation.

“ During the next few days I was busy renewing my acquaintance with various favourite spots in the Eternal City, and in that congenial occupation the incident at the convent was forgotten for the time. In fact, it must have been almost a week later that, on returning to my lodgings one evening, about the hour of the *Ave Maria*, I found one of the archbishop's cards on my table, with the words ‘ Please come and see me at once,’ written on it in English. Accordingly I put on my hat again, walked round to the college, and asked the porter to let the archbishop know that I had come.

“ ‘ But his Excellency is expecting you, my Father,’ replied the man; ‘ he told me to say, when you came, that he would be in his private study, and begged you would come up to him.’ I knew the way, so I thanked the porter and went upstairs, where I found the archbishop walking up and down his room as if waiting impatiently.

“ ‘ Good,’ he exclaimed, as I entered, ‘ I was getting afraid you might not come at all to-night; and I want your help, Philip.’

“ Of course I said I was entirely at his disposal, and asked how his inquiries had prospered.

“ ‘ Sit down, and I will tell you all about it,’ he answered, and when we were both seated he continued.

“ ‘ I went to see my friend at the Vicariate that very evening, after you had left me, and told him

exactly what had happened, including your own experience.' I suppose I changed countenance at this, for he added quickly, 'Don't be annoyed with me, Philip, he is a man of great piety and remarkable discretion, and he will not repeat the story without your express permission.

" 'Well, at the time he had nothing to tell me about the convent, but he promised to make a search in the archives, and see if there was anything there which seemed likely to help us; and then, on the Friday following, he sent for me. This time he had quite a dossier of papers, and we went through them together. Some of them dated from years back, and most were merely formal documents relating to the election and approval of superiors, dispensations, appointments of confessors, and other ordinary routine business. I was beginning to despair of finding anything that would help us, when we turned up a document, dated nearly twenty years ago, and headed, "*In the matter of the late Donna Anastasia Fulloni, formerly Superioress, etc., and a Petition for the admission of a Cause of Beatification—Report.*"

" 'It proved to be a copy of a long formal report prepared for the Congregation of Rites, to whom the nuns had sent in a petition asking for the usual commission of inquiry into the heroic sanctity of their Superioress, then lately dead, which is the first preliminary step in a cause of canonization.

“ ‘ The whole thing was really pitiful reading, for the evidence of the chaplain to the convent and of the medical man who attended the nun on her death-bed all went to show that the poor woman, far from being a saint, was a weak-minded creature, whose vanity had led her to practise a whole series of deceptions in order to create the impression that she was favoured with visions, ecstasies, and other divine privileges. On her deathbed she had confessed the truth, and commissioned her confessor to let the real facts be known, should this become necessary. Unfortunately, he took no action in the matter, and in the interval quite a little cultus began to grow up at her grave in the south transept of the church, attached to the convent. Then, finally, the nuns drew up and sent in the petition of which I told you. Of course, after this report, the Sacred Congregation dismissed the petition, and prohibited any further cultus. The whole incident was considered closed, and in fact it had been quite forgotten, until my visit led to the disinterring of the report I have mentioned.

“ ‘ There was nothing else of any importance among the papers, but my friend promised to see the Cardinal Vicar and let me know what he decided; then, early on the Monday, I got a note ordering me to call at the Vicariate at noon to see the Cardinal himself.

“ ‘ When I got there I found my friend with

his Eminence, who told me that he had heard the whole story, and wished me to make a visitation of the convent as his deputy. Of course I said that I would gladly undertake the task, and then he asked me to name some discreet priest whom I should like to have with me. I suggested your name, which he accepted at once, saying that he had met you himself; and then, as the third member of the commission, he appointed his secretary the archivist, adding that he knew him to be a friend of my own. To-day I received the document of authorization for the three of us to enter the enclosure, and hold a formal visitation of the convent as agents of the Cardinal Vicar; and the nuns have notice to expect us to-morrow about ten o'clock.'

"I was not displeased to have an opportunity of solving the mystery, if there were one, so I promised to join the archbishop and his friend at the college in good time next morning, and soon afterwards went back to my lodgings.

"Next day I reached the college about nine o'clock, and found the archbishop with his friend from the Vicariate, to whom he introduced me. The archivist was an Italian priest, about sixty years old, with white hair, and a wonderful smile that reminded me of the portraits of St Philip Neri. We talked for some little time, and got on together so well that, when the carriage was announced, I felt as if I had known him for years.

“On arriving at the convent the archbishop produced his mandate, and the three of us were admitted into the enclosure and conducted to the chapter-room which opened off the main cloister. Here we found the whole community waiting for us, some eighteen choir-nuns and nine or ten lay-sisters. On being asked if all were present the Superioress answered that one sick nun was absent in the infirmary, and on further inquiry this one proved to be the sister of the archbishop. The archivist then explained that we had been sent by the Cardinal Vicar to hold a visitation as his deputies; and that the three of us together would interview each of the nuns in turn.

“The community then retired, returning one by one to be interrogated by the archbishop. Most of them declared that everything about the convent was quite satisfactory, though some points of detail were mentioned; but we heard nothing to confirm our suspicion of an illicit cultus. When all had been seen, we had a few minutes' private talk, and agreed to go through the convent first on our tour of inspection, and finally to visit the infirmary and interview the archbishop's sister, whose sickness seemed curiously inopportune.

“The Reverend Mother and four of the nuns then conducted us round the cloister and ground-floor rooms, and afterwards to the choir chapel upstairs. This chapel, you will remember, was



really the upper portion of one transept of the church, but the nuns had redecorated the walls in typical Roman style, with great panels of red silk damask, framed in gilded mouldings. All this time, I ought to say, I had felt in perfect health, and no suspicion of what was to happen had crossed my mind. But the moment we entered the chapel the physical oppression which I had felt in the convent church on my previous visit returned with overwhelming force.

"Laying my hand on the archbishop's arm, I told him in a whisper what was the matter, and he hurried me forward to a chair which stood close to the large window that opened into the church. I sank into the chair, for I was almost fainting, but after a minute or so I felt stronger and opened my eyes. Opposite to me there was a *prie-dieu*, placed so that anyone kneeling on it would face *not* towards the altar in the church beneath, but towards the side wall of the chapel.

" 'It was there the nun I saw was kneeling, Sigismund,' I whispered, 'ask the Reverend Mother to take down that red silk panel.'

"The archbishop beckoned the Superioress forward, and made the request I had suggested.

" 'But it is not meant to be removed,' the nun expostulated volubly, but with evident nervousness.

How is one to take it down without damaging it ?

"The archbishop turned to the group standing at

the entrance of the chapel. 'Which is the sacristan?' he asked, and one of the nuns came forward.

" 'Remove this,' he ordered, pointing to the wall beyond the *prie-dieu*. The nun hesitated a moment, but a stern look from the archbishop decided her, and going up to the wall she kneeled down, as if to get at something near the floor. There was a click, as if a lock were turned, and the tall silk panel swung outwards like a door. As it did so a wild shriek of laughter rang through the chapel. It was the Superioress, whose self-control had suddenly failed her, and she burst into violent hysterics.

"The other nuns ran forward quickly, but the archbishop's voice rang out in a tone of command. 'Let the Sub-prioress and sacristan stay here, and the rest of you take your Prioress to her room. I will send for anyone I want, when I am ready.'

"We waited before the open panel, while the shrieks of hysterical laughter grew fainter, and finally died away in the distance, and then the Archbishop turned to me.

" 'Do you feel equal to moving now, Philip?'" he asked.

" 'Certainly,' I said, 'the faintness has passed away;' and in fact I felt my normal self once more.

" 'Good,' he replied, 'then we will continue our inspection;' and turning to the two nuns who were still with us, he bade them go before us through the door revealed in the wall.

"You will have guessed the rest of the story already. Beyond the secret door was a small room fitted up as a chapel. In the centre was a kind of shrine, decorated with a red velvet pall or covering, elaborately embroidered in gold, and surrounded by candles. It contained the remains of the late Superioress, Anastasia Fulloni, which the nuns had exhumed from their grave in the transept beneath, after it had become a sacristy.

"By dint of searching inquiries we found that the foolish women had refused to accept the decision of the Congregation of Rites in the matter of her beatification, and had developed a private cultus of their own; converting what had been a tribune, with a gallery opening into the transept, into the secret chapel which we had discovered so dramatically." The old man paused, as if his story were ended, but I could not let him leave it so incomplete.

"Surely," I asked, "the authorities took a very grave view of the affair, did they not?"

"Yes, indeed," replied he, "for such a thing is a most serious scandal. The archbishop reported the whole matter to the Cardinal Vicar, and a few days later was summoned to the Vatican, where he repeated it to the Holy Father in person. Within a week the convent was suppressed, each nun being sent to a different house of the Order, except the archbishop's sister, who was allowed to choose for herself the convent she preferred. A year or two

later the church and conventual buildings were handed over to one of the new religious congregations of men, which had not previously possessed a house in Rome. The new-comers destroyed the nuns' choir, and opened the transept into the church once more, turning the tribune, which had formed the secret chapel, into an organ loft.

"The body of Anastasia Fulloni was reburied in its former grave, where you may still read the original inscription on the slab unchanged, and I doubt if there are now fifty people living who remember the poor creature's name. But, for my part, every time I have been in Rome since then, I have made a point of visiting the church and saying Mass there for the repose of her soul."\*

\* As one of Father Pater's friends has expressed some doubt whether he would have approved the publication of this story, seeing that he was an ardent supporter of contemplative life, especially in the case of women, it will be of interest to add the following extract from my diary of the date on which he told it to me :

". . . Squire told me true but very curious story of convent in Rome, where private cultus of a deceased nun was developed in defiance of the authorities. I asked if occurrences of such a kind—*i.e.*, indicating a misconception of religious ideals and contempt for authority—were at all common among enclosed religious. Squire said : 'No ; quite the contrary. In fact, the chief interest of the story is that, so far as I know, it is a unique example of such folly among nuns, who, as a class, are people of strong common sense, about the last folk in the world to originate a bizarre and improper novelty, such as a false cultus. If the event had not happened within my own personal experience, I should not have believed it possible, and, even as it is, I cannot understand how it can have developed so as to involve

## “OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ”

ONE afternoon I had walked to the village with the squire, as he wished to visit a pensioner of his, an old woman who lay bed-ridden in a cottage close by the little church, which his father had built about the year 1840, for the Catholics of the neighbourhood. I knew the old priest would prefer to be alone with “Aunt Sarah,” as she was always called, so I said I would wait in the church during his visit, and he promised to come back there for me as soon as he was ready.

Either Aunt Sarah was more garrulous than

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the whole community. If we knew the inner history of the convent, I am convinced we should find some quite exceptional influence at work, to throw the good sense of the nuns off its balance so terribly. As a student of psychology—and the psychology of religion in particular—I think the story ought to be put on record, since it manifests such an abnormal development. It may be that, in the light of new psychological laws as yet unknown to us, an explanation of the whole may be forthcoming. But I want you to understand clearly that the incident is quite without a parallel, and is no more typical of the normal type of convent than the actions of a maniac are typical of a sane man. But just as the study of lunacy has cast a flood of light upon normal psychology, so a story like this may help to elucidate the laws of religious psychology, and for that reason I am anxious it should not be forgotten.’”—R. P.

usual, or else the squire forgot about the lapse of time, for I waited and waited; a quarter of an hour, half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, and my patience was rapidly ebbing away. I had explored every corner of the church and read the inscriptions on the various memorials, and now I moved out into the churchyard and began to repeat the process outside. I could not have been there more than a minute or two, when I heard a step behind me and there was the old priest, full of apologies.

“I was in hopes you would have gone for your walk and left me,” he said. “I am so sorry for keeping you so long, but somehow we got talking and I never noticed how the time was slipping by. You must have been dreadfully bored, for the study of tombstones is not an exhilarating pastime, though this place has a great charm for me; but then I have known almost every one of those who lie buried here, while to you they are simply so many names with their dates of birth and death. That cross there, for example, marks the grave of my old nurse, Susan Norham; and just beyond it lies old Wilson, who was butler at the hall before I was born, and retained the post for more than fifty years. Just here at our feet lies that dear child, Mary Clayton;” and the old man pointed with his stick to a long horizontal slab incised with a simple Gothic cross.

I looked down at the inscription, which ran as



follows: "Pray for the soul of MARY CLAYTON, Born 1870, Died 1887. 'Jesus called a little child unto him.'"

"Was she not rather old to be called 'a little child,'?" I asked thoughtlessly, not noticing how the old priest's eyes had filled with tears, as he stood looking down at the grave in silence.

"Rather old in years, perhaps," he answered gently, "but in purity and simplicity she was a child still. 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven'—I never realized how true that was, until Mary Clayton revealed it to me." Then he turned away with a sigh, and passing through the private gate which opened into the park, we walked on in silence for a minute or two.

"Would you care to hear about her?" he asked at length. "It is a simple story, but I think a very beautiful one; and I fancy you would find it interesting too." I accepted the offer eagerly, and as we had reached a seat by the side of the lower lake, the old man sat down upon it and began.

"Mary Clayton was born in the village here on the feast of our blessed Lady's Assumption, that was why she was christened Mary. Her father was the last of a family of Catholic yeomen, who had worked on the estate for generations past; a simple, strong, young fellow, devoted to our family, and as reliable as he could be. Her mother

was an orphan girl, who had been brought up by some nuns in their convent, and it may have been largely due to their influence that she was such an exceptionally refined, gentle creature.

“One would have said they were meant for long life and happiness; but the ways of Providence are not our ways, and William Clayton, Mary’s father, died from the effects of an accident, two or three years after the child was born. His wife was literally heart-broken at losing him, and the village people used to say that she was like a woman in a dream for the rest of her life. She died when Mary was twelve years old, and on her deathbed I promised to look after the orphan girl myself.

“At that time Susan Norham, my old nurse, whose grave you saw just now, was still alive and acting as housekeeper for me, so I asked her advice on the best way of fulfilling my promise. I did not want to educate the child above her station in life, but at the same time her exceptional character was even then apparent, and I wished to keep her close at hand so that I could see for myself how she would develop.

“Susan took in the situation at once, and with her strong practical common sense found an obvious solution for me. It appeared that she needed, or thought she needed, another girl to help in the house, and although Mary was only a little over twelve, she volunteered to take her at once.

“ ‘ You see, sir,’ she explained, ‘ it is better for me to have a young girl and teach her the work slowly but properly, instead of taking one who thinks she knows all about it before she begins, and so has a lot to unlearn.’ ”

“ The scheme seemed a capital one, so Mary came to Stanton Rivers, and was apprenticed, so to speak, to Mrs. Norham. I used to see her at Mass, and occasionally met her about the house; but I was careful not to let the other servants see that I took any special interest in her, and no one but the old housekeeper, who was absolutely trustworthy, had any idea that I was her legal guardian. It was nearly two years before anything occurred to bring the child into personal relations with me at all, and the way it happened was this.

“ Then, as now, Avison used to serve my Mass every morning, and all the other servants, of course, attended it. I had never thought of getting anyone else taught to serve Mass, and so, when Avison was suddenly taken rather seriously ill, there was, for all I knew, not one of the men in the place who was able to act as server. I foresaw overnight that this difficulty might occur, so I told Mrs. Norham to inquire in the servants’ hall if there was anyone who knew how to answer at Mass. At first it seemed that there was no one, but after a moment little Mary Clayton admitted shyly that she could do so.

“Next morning the child answered for me at Mass, and she did it so well that I sent for her later in the day to say how pleased I was. She was now nearly fourteen, and old for her age, and somehow our talk developed into an intimate spiritual conference, and she told me quite a lot about herself.

“It appeared that her mother had taught her to practise mental prayer from the time of her tenth birthday, and she had kept up the practice ever since. I asked how she managed to find time for it, and she told me that she did so by getting up early, so as to spend half an hour in prayer before beginning work at half-past six. On her mother’s advice, too, she had begun to go to Communion every week, and, rather to my surprise, she asked if it would be possible for her to communicate more often in future.

“You must remember that this was many years before the famous *motu proprio* of Pius X on frequent Communion, and I felt a little doubtful on the subject. Not, of course, that there was anything rash in so excellent a desire, but I feared it might attract attention and lead to gossip in the servants’ hall. In the end the difficulty solved itself, as such things always do when God wishes it. I found that it was part of Mary’s work to dust the chapel and keep it tidy, and that she always did this the first thing in the morning. I arranged, therefore,

to give her Communion privately, before she began her work, and the half-hour's mental prayer thus fitted in perfectly as a time of preparation. I told Mrs. Norham of the arrangement and warned her not to let it become known to the other servants; and thanks to her discretion and to the fact that the chapel is somewhat out of the way, I fancy none of them ever discovered that one of their number was a daily communicant, for such Mary soon became.

"From this time on she made me her confessor and spiritual adviser, and I soon realized that she was already far advanced in the way of perfection. Her sense of the presence of God was extraordinarily vivid, and while she had, of course, read nothing of the great mystical writers, she described herself as 'feeling our blessed Lord at her side,' in words which were almost identical with those of St Teresa. Besides the intense personal love of Jesus, of which this sensible presence was the outcome, she cherished a deep devotion to our blessed Lady, whom she had come to regard quite literally as her mother, since the time when she was left an orphan.

"It happened that her fourteenth birthday occurred a month or two after our first conversation, and the next morning, after I had given her Communion, she asked if she might speak to me a moment. I consented, of course, supposing that

she had something to ask about her work, but what she told me was this.

“On the previous night she had gone to bed as usual and soon fell asleep. After a few hours she awoke; at least, so it seemed to her at the time, but in the morning she was doubtful if it were not all a very vivid dream. Whichever it was, however, she seemed to herself to be standing near the end of a long corridor, with a number of doors on one side and a row of windows on the other. Some distance down the corridor was a group of figures, ‘like beautiful young ladies,’ who were moving slowly towards her. When they had approached quite close, the foremost of them moved aside and she saw in the centre of the group a lady of wonderful beauty and dignity, ‘like a great queen,’ and she knew in some inexplicable way that it was the blessed Mother of God. Her first sensation was one of fear—‘I felt as if I should like to sink into the ground,’ she said; but this passed away immediately, as the Queen of Heaven smiled and held out her hand towards the child. Mary fell on her knees and kissed the outstretched hand, a feeling of intense love and gratitude surged through her heart, and while she remained kneeling, not daring to look up, our blessed Lady spoke to her.

“‘You love my Son, little one,’ she said. ‘Love him ever, more and more. If you do so, you shall



join us some day, and shall see him face to face, as do all they who love him truly.'

"With this she turned and passed, with her train of attendants, through one of the doors at the side of the gallery, and Mary was left alone, but with a sense of indescribable joy.

"It was certainly a remarkable experience, and I was not prepared to say if it were a vision or only a dream, but as time passed and the effects on her soul showed themselves to be both good and lasting, I felt that it was a direct grace from God. When months went by, however, and nothing of the kind occurred again, I began to think it was probably a dream, and took occasion to impress upon her that she must not attach importance to such things, as the smallest step forward in perfection was more valuable than any number of visions. She received what I said with perfect submission, and so far from showing any sign of over-valuing the occurrence, I soon found that she was giving far less thought to it than I was.

"Things went on as usual for a year, and Mary made a very definite advance in prayer, entering upon what mystical writers call the 'Prayer of Simplicity' or 'of loving attention to God,' which is often a kind of preliminary to the lower stages of mysticism; then, after twelve months, the feast of the Assumption and the child's fifteenth birthday came round together. For my part I had quite

forgotten that it was the anniversary of her experience of the previous year, and she told me herself that this fact had escaped her memory till afterwards; but the next morning, after her Communion, she again asked if she might speak to me.

“ ‘ You remember the dream, or whatever it was, which I had last year, Father,’ she said, ‘ about our blessed Lady, I mean ? Well, last night she came again.’ ”

“ I asked her to tell me exactly what happened, and she repeated precisely the same story as on the previous occasion, until she came to the point where the blessed Mother of God spoke to her.

“ ‘ This time she said more to me, Father,’ she told me, ‘ and as far as I can remember it was this :

“ ‘ “ My child, you have done as I directed, and my Son loves you yet more dearly, because he sees how earnestly you strive to please him. Persevere in this and he will reward you greatly, for you shall be one of my chosen band of virgins and shall join us hereafter.” ’ ”

“ Then, as before, she turned and passed through one of the doors at the side of the corridor, and this time Mary rose from her knees and tried to follow. One of the attendant virgins, however, stopped her, saying gently:

“ ‘ Not yet; you must not come with us now, but you shall do so later,’ and passing through she closed the door behind her. This time, too, Mary

noticed that the door through which the blessed Virgin and her suite had passed seemed nearer the end of the gallery than on the previous occasion, and she observed that it was the third door from the end.

“The next twelve months saw a wonderful progress in the soul of the child—for so I still regarded her, though she was far ahead of me in things spiritual. She asked and obtained my consent to make a vow of chastity for a year, and from that time forward began to experience the prayer of quiet. I rather expected, after what had happened, that she would be favoured with further experiences in the way of visions; for I no longer doubted that what she had received was a vision and not merely a dream. Nothing of the kind occurred, however, which was a reassuring fact, as showing that the two previous occurrences were not likely to be subjective or produced by the imagination; but one thing did take place which I think bore upon the situation.

“It must have been shortly before Christmas, and therefore some four months after the second vision, that she told me one day how she had lately felt an intense desire to suffer for Christ’s sake. I knew she was not over-strong and very sensitive to pain, so I hesitated to give any sort of approval to the proposal she made, that she should offer herself to our Lord as a victim, in expiation of the

evil wrought against him by sinners. I told her that I did not think she ought to do anything of the kind without a very definite inspiration to do so, and forbade her to make any such offering of herself without my permission.

“A week or two later came Christmas Eve, and I said Mass just after midnight and gave Communion to all the servants, Mary among the rest. It chanced that she was the last of all to communicate, and immediately after she had received I walked back to the altar with the ciborium. My mind was full of the feast and the infant Saviour of the world; nothing, I suppose, was further from my thoughts than Mary's wish to offer herself to Jesus as a victim for the sins of others. I replaced the ciborium in the tabernacle, and, as I did so, chanced to raise my eyes so that they fell upon the crucifix above. At the same moment a voice seemed to whisper in my ears:

“‘For this cause was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.’ . . . ‘He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple.’ . . . ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.’ At once the conviction forced itself upon me that these words had to do with Mary's wish to immolate herself by vicarious suffering. I finished the Mass and unvested, for I meant to say the other two Masses in the morning, and after completing my thanks-

giving rose to leave the chapel. By the door I saw Mary, still kneeling, and as I approached she came forward to meet me.

“ ‘ You have something to tell me, Father, have you not ? ’ she said, to my surprise. ‘ Jesus told me at Communion that you had. ’

“ ‘ It is true, my child, ’ I answered, for I could have no doubt now as to the meaning of the words I had heard. ‘ I withdraw my command; you may offer yourself to Jesus as you wish, and may he accept your service and bless you in all things. ’ With this I hurried out, for I could not trust myself to say more.

“ A couple of weeks later Mrs. Norham came to me one morning and said that she thought Mary ought to see the doctor. I asked why, adding that I had seen the child about her work as usual, and that she appeared to be quite well.

“ ‘ So she does, sir, ’ answered the old house-keeper, ‘ but I happened to go into her room this morning without knocking, for I knew she ought to be downstairs at the time. Instead I found her kneeling at the bedside and groaning. I asked her what was the matter, and she said ‘ Nothing. ’ But I told her, people don’t kneel all of a heap and groan because nothing is the matter with them, and in the end she admitted that her back was hurting badly. It’s my belief she has strained herself in some way, though neither she nor I can think of

what has done it, and I shan't be easy till she has seen the doctor.'

"Of course I had the doctor sent for at once. He came, examined Mary, and agreed that she must have incurred some strain, and recommended her to be kept quiet in bed for a few days; to which prescription Mrs. Norham added a good deal of poulticing, etc., on her own account. I had to be away from home for a fortnight or so just then, and when I returned the girl was up again and about her work as usual. She admitted to me that the pain came on at times, and was often very bad at night; but added that it usually disappeared in the morning, so that she was able to get up for Mass as if nothing were the matter.

"In this way the year slipped by, and Mary's patience and resignation seemed to increase as the pains became more frequent. At length the feast of the Assumption came round again, and I felt pretty sure that it would not pass without some special occurrence. Sure enough, next day, Mary told me that the blessed Mother of God had visited her a third time.

" 'It was soon after midnight, Father,' she said, 'and I feel sure it was not a dream this time, for my back had been hurting me terribly all night, and I had not slept for a moment. Everything happened just as it did before, except that, after I had kissed the blessed Mother's hand, she laid



it on my head for a few moments, saying as she did so:

“ ‘ ‘ Have courage, my child, and do not flinch in your sufferings. You have chosen the best way to the heart of my Son, and Jesus loves you most dearly for doing so. Be brave and persevere a little longer. Next time I come, it will be to take you to him.’ With that she passed out of the corridor, and I noticed this time that the door through which she went was the last but one in the row.’

“ For the first time the significance of the doors occurred to me.

“ ‘ It was the third door last time, was it not, my child ?’ I asked her; ‘ and the fourth door the time before that ?’

“ ‘ Yes, Father,’ she replied; ‘ at least I think it was the fourth door through which she went the first time I saw her, but I am sure it was the third one a year ago, and the second one last night.’

“ ‘ What do you think it means, this matter of the doors ?’ I asked, though I had no doubt in my own mind. Her answer showed me that the same idea had occurred to her also, for she replied:

“ ‘ I think it means that the next feast of the Assumption will be my last birthday, Father, and that on it Jesus will take me to himself.’ A look of intense happiness came into her face as she said this, and I felt convinced it would prove correct.

“ From that day the pains in her back became

intensified and scarcely ever left her. I had a great specialist down to examine her, and he told me afterwards that nothing could be done.

“ ‘The girl has evidently received some injury to the spine,’ he said. ‘It may possibly have occurred several years ago and only become evident very slowly as she grew up. However, there is no doubt about her condition now, and I must tell you at once that her case is a hopeless one. She will live some months for certain, possibly even for a year or more, but human skill can do nothing to save her. Of course she must do no work, and before long she will have to take to her bed permanently, and then the end will not be far off.’

“ ‘When he had gone Mary asked me what his opinion was. I hesitated for a little, but finally told her that he said her case was hopeless, but that she might linger for a year or even longer, and that her sufferings would not grow less. I wish you could have seen the look of joy that came over her as she listened.

“ ‘ ‘Thanks be to God,’ she said gently, when I had finished. ‘Pray for me, Father, I beg you, that I may not prove unworthy of so wonderful a grace.’

“ ‘The year dragged on and Mary’s sufferings were sometimes terrible to witness; but with them came consolations so marvellous that, at times, I longed to change places with her. She advanced

rapidly in things spiritual, and her prayer soon began to include short periods of mystical union. Not long after her sixteenth birthday she told me that she had seen in a vision the hands of our blessed Lord, pierced with the sacred stigmata and bleeding, and that at the same moment he had said to her: 'Thus am I wounded in the house of my friends.'

"This was the first 'imaginative vision' of Jesus that she had received, and I had some difficulty in reassuring her, for her first impression on coming to herself had been that it was a delusion. Later she beheld his sacred feet, as if nailed to the cross, and later still the wound in his side. Then on Good Friday, at midday, she passed into a trance, and remained so for fully three hours. On recovering the use of her senses she told me that she had seen our blessed Lord hanging on the cross before her, and that he had spoken many things to her, but forbade her to repeat them, save this, that of all his creatures he loved those best who strove to follow in his footsteps, and suffered gladly for the sins of others as he himself had done on Calvary.

"From that day, so far as I could judge, Mary entered upon the supreme state of prayer which mystical writers call 'spiritual nuptials.' Her ecstasies were now of almost daily occurrence; so, to keep the state she was in from the knowledge of the servants, I installed two nursing sisters from a well-known convent, the Superioress of which was

a personal friend of mine, so that I was able, through her, to bind them to secrecy, so long as Mary lived.

“A week or so before the feast of the Assumption all pain suddenly ceased, and the relief was so great that for some hours the nurses began to hope she might recover. I spoke to her on the subject that evening when I visited her, and she told me this was a mistake.

“‘It is our blessed Lord’s doing,’ she explained to me. ‘He does not wish me to lose the opportunities of the next few days, so he has taken away all pain from me, to free me from distraction. From this time on I must attend to him only, so pardon me, Father, if I speak very little, even to you.’

“After that, though I saw her three or four times a day, she seldom spoke more than a few words, and those were simply loving expressions of thanksgiving to God for the graces she was receiving, which, she said, made her feel as if she were almost in heaven already. Her strength grew less every day, and I judged that the time had come for her to receive the last Sacraments; for the doctor had warned me that a collapse might come abruptly at any time now. I told her what I thought, and she at once agreed; so I anointed her and administered Holy Viaticum on the following morning, which was the 13th of August.

“It happened that I was obliged to be away all

that day on business, so I did not see her again until the next morning, when I found her evidently much weaker. She could only speak in a faint whisper now, and I asked the nurse to leave us alone for a little while, as I thought she might wish to speak to me privately; nor was I wrong.

“‘Father,’ she said, ‘I am all alone. Since yesterday morning, when you gave me the last Sacraments, I have lost all sense of the presence. Jesus seems to have left me, as his disciples left him in his passion. His presence has gone from me, as wholly as if I had never known it.’

“I told her she must be brave and accept the deprivation as God’s holy will. That he knew what was best for her, and doubtless wished her to suffer in solitude and darkness as he had suffered. She caught at the word ‘suffer,’ and murmured faintly:

“‘It is true, Father; you are right, for I am suffering again terribly.’

“‘Then has the pain returned, my child?’ I asked her.

“‘Oh, yes,’ she whispered, ‘it has all come back again, only it is far worse than ever before; I feel as if my back had broken. I can scarcely endure to lie still for a moment, but if I try to move I find I cannot.’

“When the doctor came I told him how the pain had all returned; and he answered that, in that

case, the end could not be far off. After remaining with Mary for some time, he came out and told me that he did not think she would live through the night, and that he intended to give her some morphia to allay the pain she suffered. I insisted that he should ask her permission before doing so, and, as I expected, she gently but quite absolutely refused to take it. About sunset, however, the pain grew less acute, and finally she fell asleep, for she was utterly worn out with the sufferings of the last four-and-twenty hours; and the nurse told me she would probably pass away without waking.

“Somehow I felt fairly sure that this would not be the case; so about eleven o’clock I came back to her room and sat by her bedside, saying Matins and Lauds of the Assumption. Perhaps you will think it was all subjective and due to the circumstances of the moment; but I have never felt the inspiration of the breviary so marvellously as I did that night, as I sat there, saying the office of the blessed Virgin by the bedside of her dying child.

“You remember the gospel of the feast; it is the one which tells how Jesus came to the house of Martha and Mary, and ends with the words ‘Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.’ As I repeated them I glanced at the dying girl who lay there motionless, her face thin and pale with the long months of suffering, which she had endured so bravely for the love of



God. In a few hours now it would all be over, and I knew for certain that she had indeed chosen the best part, and would find the same reward as Mary Magdalen. When I had finished the office I looked at my watch—it was well past midnight; the feast of the Assumption, Mary's seventeenth birthday, had dawned. Then I think I must have fallen asleep, for the next thing I remember was hearing a clock in the passage strike three. I roused myself at once and, looking at Mary, found that she too was awake. Her eyes were open, and she gave me a smile of recognition as I bent towards her, asking if there was anything she wished me to do.

“‘Pray for me, Father,’ she answered, in a whisper so low that I could only just hear it. ‘I feel so faint and exhausted that I can scarcely say a prayer myself, but I must live until our holy Mother comes for me.’

“‘Do you think she will come soon, now?’ I asked her.

“‘Yes, indeed,’ she answered, ‘very, very soon; and this time I know she will take me with her.’

“I wish I could give you some idea of the calm conviction of her words; it was as if she were speaking of something about which no doubt could possibly arise, and her worn, pale face was all alight with the joy of expectancy. I told her to lie still and not exhaust herself with speaking, and like an

obedient child she closed her eyes and lay silent for an hour or more. Then, all at once, her eyes opened and she spoke again in a quick, eager whisper.

“‘Hark, Father,’ she said, ‘do you not hear the music?’

“‘What music, my child?’ I answered in surprise.

“‘Oh, but you must hear it, Father,’ she continued. ‘It is faint, and far away; but oh! so clear and lovely. Listen, it is coming nearer every moment.’ There was a pause for perhaps a minute and then she spoke again.

“‘It must be she, our Mother—she is coming for me—did I not tell you she was coming for me—Ah!’

“With a gasp she ceased speaking, and, to my utter amazement, the dying child, who had been unable to move for many days past, sat up in bed without the slightest sign of pain. Quickly I put out my arm to support her, lest she should fall back, but there was no need. She sat erect, her body rigid and motionless, nor did I feel the slightest pressure on my arm.

“For fully a minute she remained like that, silent and entranced; her eyes gazing straight before her with a fixed intensity, utterly absorbed by the vision that I could not see.

“‘O blessed Mother,’ she murmured softly, ‘Mother of God, and our most gentle Queen and Mother; Mother of Jesus, take me to my Lord.’

"A long pause followed, while Mary sat there motionless, with parted lips, as if listening intently. Then suddenly a wonderful smile lit up her features.

" 'Jesus,' she murmured, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,' and then the limp weight of her body fell against me, and I laid it softly back upon the pillow."

## THE ASTROLOGER'S LEGACY

**M**AY 26th, St Philip's feast, is the squire's birthday, and every year he celebrates the day by giving a little dinner party to a few very intimate friends. But, as he says, rather sadly, "I have outlived most of my generation"; and, for some years past, the whole number, including the host and a guest or two who may be staying at the Hall, has seldom reached as many as ten.

On the first birthday for which I was present there were only half a dozen of us in all at the dinner. These were, first, Father Bertrand, an English Dominican Friar, and one of the squire's oldest friends, who usually spent some weeks with him every summer. Second, Sir John Gervase, a local baronet and antiquarian, who, besides being an F.S.A., and one of the greatest living authorities on stained glass, was also one of the few Catholic gentry in the neighbourhood of Stanton Rivers. The third was Herr Aufrecht, a German professor, who had come to England to study some manuscripts in the British Museum, and had brought a letter of introduction from a common friend in Munich. Fourth, there was the rector of

the next parish, who had been a fellow of one of the colleges at Cambridge for most of his life, but had accepted the living, which was in the gift of his college, a few years previously, and had since become very intimate with the old squire, who, with myself, completed the number.

The mansion of Stanton Rivers is built round a little quadrangle, of which the servants' quarters and kitchen occupy the north side, the dining-room being at the north end of the west wing. When we are alone, however, the squire has all meals served in the morning-room; a small, cheerful apartment on the east side of the house, with dull, ivory-coloured walls, hung with exquisite old French pastels, and furnished entirely with Chipendale furniture, designed expressly for the squire's grandfather by the famous cabinet maker; the original contract and bills for which are preserved in the family archives.

The birthday dinner, however, as befits an "institution," is always served in the dining-room proper, which is approached through the beautiful long apartment, stretching the whole length of the west wing, which the squire has made into the library. The dining-room is large and finely proportioned, and has its original Jacobean decoration, the walls being panelled in dark oak, with a carved cornice and plaster ceiling delicately moulded with a strapwork design, in which the cockle shells

of the Rivers escutcheon are repeated again and again in combination with the leopards' heads of Stanton. The broad, deep fireplace has polished steel "dogs" instead of a grate, and above it is a carved overmantel reaching to the ceiling, and emblazoned with all the quarterings the united families can boast, with their two mottoes, which combine so happily, *Sans Dieu rien* and *Garde ta Foy*.

I think the squire would prefer not to use the dining-room even for his birthday dinner, but he hasn't the heart to sadden Avison, the butler, by suggesting this. Indeed, the occasion is Avison's annual opportunity, and he glories in decking out the table with the finest things the house possesses in the way of family plate, glass, and china: while Mrs. Parkin, the cook, and Saunders, the gardener, in their respective capacities, second his efforts with the utmost zeal.

The evening was an exquisite one, and we sat in the library talking and watching the changing effects of the fading lights as they played on the garden before the windows, until Avison threw open the folding doors and announced that dinner was served. Hitherto I had only seen the room in *déshabillé*, and it was quite a surprise to see how beautiful it now looked. The dark panelling, reflecting the warm sunset glow which came in through the broad mullioned windows, formed a perfect background



to the dinner-table, with its shaded candles, delicate flowers, and gleams of light from glass and plate : and I felt that Avison's effort was really an artistic triumph. The same thought, I fancy, struck the rest of the guests, for no sooner had Father Bertrand said grace than Sir John burst out in admiration :

"My dear squire, what exquisite things you do possess ! Some day I shall come and commit a burglary on you. Your glass and silver are a positive temptation."

The host smiled, but I noticed that his eyes were fixed on the centre of the table, and that the eyelids were slightly drawn down, an expression I had learned to recognize as a sign of annoyance, carefully controlled. Following his gaze, I glanced at the table-centre, but before I could decide what it was, the German professor, who was sitting next me, broke out in a genial roar :

"Mein Gott, Herr Pater, but what is this ?" and he pointed to the exquisite piece of plate in the centre of the table.

"We call it the Cellini fountain, Herr Aufrecht," answered the squire, "though it is certainly not a fountain, but a rose-water dish, and I can give you very little evidence that it is really Cellini's work."

"Effidence," exclaimed the German—"it has its own effidence. What more want you ? None but Benvenuto could broduce such a one. But how did you come to possess it ?"

There was no doubt about the eyelids now, and I feared the other guests would notice their host's annoyance, but the squire controlled his voice perfectly as he answered:

"Oh, it has been in the family for more than three centuries; Sir Hubert Rivers, the ancestor whose portrait hangs at the foot of the stairs, is believed to have brought it back from Italy."

I thought I could guess the cause of his annoyance now, for the ancestor in question had possessed a most unenviable reputation, and, by a strange trick of heredity, the squire's features were practically a reproduction of Sir Hubert's—a fact which was a source of no little secret chagrin to the saintly old priest. Fortunately, at this point, the rector turned the conversation down another channel; Herr Aufrecht did not pursue the subject further, and the squire's eyelids soon regained their normal elevation.

As the meal advanced the German came out as quite a brilliant talker, and the conversational ball was kept up so busily between Father Bertrand, the rector, and himself that the other three of us had little to do but listen and be entertained. A good deal of the talk was above my head, however, and during these periods my attention came back to the great rose-water dish which shone and glittered in the centre of the table.

In the first place I had never seen it before, which

struck me as a little odd, for Avison had discovered my enthusiasm for old silver, and so had taken me to the pantry and displayed all the plate for my benefit. However, I concluded that so valuable a piece was probably put away in the strong-room, which would account for its not appearing with the rest.

What puzzled me more was the unusual character of the design, for every curve and line of the beautiful piece seemed purposely arranged to concentrate the attention on a large globe of rock crystal, which formed the centre and summit of the whole. The actual basin, filled with rose-water, extended beneath this ball, which was supported by four exquisite silver figures, and the constant play of reflected lights between the water and the crystal was so fascinating that I wondered the idea had never been repeated; yet, so far as my knowledge went, the design was unique.

Seated as I was, at the foot of the table, I faced the squire, and after a while I noticed that he, too, had dropped out of the conversation, and had his gaze fixed on the crystal globe. All at once his eyes dilated and his lips parted quickly, as if in surprise, while his gaze became concentrated with an intensity that startled me. This lasted for fully a minute, and then Avison happened to take away his plate. The distraction evidently broke the spell, whatever it was, for he began to talk again, and, as it seemed

to me, kept his eyes carefully away from the crystal during the rest of the meal.

After we had drunk the squire's health, we retired to the library, where Avison brought us coffee, and about ten o'clock Sir John's carriage was announced. He had promised to give the rector a lift home, so the two of them soon departed together, and only the professor and Father Bertrand were left with the squire and myself. I felt a little afraid lest Herr Aufrecht should return to the subject of the Cellini fountain, but to my surprise, as soon as the other two were gone, the squire himself brought up the subject, which I thought he wished to avoid.

"You seemed interested in the rose-water fountain, Herr Aufrecht," he remarked, "would you like to examine it now that the others are gone?"

The German beamed with delight, and accepted the proposal volubly, while the squire rang the bell for Avison, and ordered him to bring the Cellini fountain to the library for Herr Aufrecht to see. The butler looked almost as pleased as the professor, and in a minute the splendid piece of plate was placed on a small table, arranged in the full light of a big shaded lamp.

The professor's flow of talk stopped abruptly as the conversationalist gave place to the connoisseur. Seating himself beside the little table, he produced a pocket lens, and proceeded to examine every part of the fountain with minute care, turning it slowly

round as he did so. For fully five minutes he sat in silence, absorbed in his examination, and I noticed that his attention returned continually to the great crystal globe, supported by the four lovely figures, which formed the summit of the whole. Then he leaned back in his chair and delivered his opinion.

"It is undoubtedly by Cellini," he said, "and yet the *schema* is not like him. I think the patron for whom he laboured did compel him thus to fashion it. That great crystal ball at top—no, it is not what Benvenuto would do of himself. Think you not so?" and he turned to the squire with a look of interrogation.

"I will tell you all I know about it in a minute, professor," answered the old priest, "but first please explain to me why you think Cellini was not left free in the design."

"Ach so," replied the German, "it is the crystal globe. He is too obvious, too assertive; how is it you say in English, he 'hit you in the eye.' You haf read the *Memoirs* of Benvenuto?" The squire nodded. "Ach, then you must see it, yourself. Do you not remember the great morse he make, the cope-clasp for Clemens *septimus*? The Pope show to him his great diamond, and demand a model for a clasp with it set therein. The other artists, all of them, did make the diamond the centre of the whole design. But Cellini? No. He put him at the feet of God the Father, so that the lustre

of the great gem would set off all the work, but should not dominate the whole, for *ars est celare artem*. Now here," and he laid his hand upon the crystal globe, "here it is otherwise. These statuette, they are perfection, in every way they are worth far more than is the crystal. Yet, the great ball, he crush them, he kill them. You see him first, last, all the time. No, he is there for a purpose, but the purpose is not that of the design, not an artistic purpose, no. I am sure of it, he is there for use."

As he finished speaking, he turned quickly towards the squire, and looked up at him with an air of conviction. I followed his example, and saw the old priest smiling quietly with an expression of admiration and agreement.

"You are perfectly right, professor," he said quietly, "the crystal was put there with a purpose, at least so I firmly believe; and I expect you can tell us also what the purpose was."

"No, no, Herr Pater," answered the other. "If you know the reason, why make I guesses at it? Better you should tell us all about it, is it not so?"

"Very well," replied the squire, and he seated himself beside the little table. Father Bertrand and myself did the same, and when we were all settled, he turned to the professor and began:

"I mentioned at dinner that this piece of plate was brought from Italy by Sir Hubert Rivers, and,



first of all, I must tell you something about him. He was born about the year 1500, and lived to be over ninety years old, so his life practically coincides with the sixteenth century. His father died soon after Hubert came of age, and he thus became a person of some importance while still quite young. He was knighted by Henry VIII a year or two later, and soon afterwards was sent to Rome in the train of the English Ambassador.

“There his brilliant parts attracted attention, and he soon abandoned his diplomatic position to become a member of the Papal *entourage*, though without any official position. When the breach between Henry and the Pope took place, he attached himself to the suite of the Imperial Ambassador, thus avoiding any trouble with his own sovereign, who could not afford to quarrel still further with the Emperor, as well as any awkward questions as to his religious opinions.

“Of his life in Rome I can tell you practically nothing, but if tradition be true, he was a typical son of the Renaissance. He played with art, literature, and politics; and he more than played with astrology and the black arts, being, in fact, a member of the famous, or infamous, Academy. You may remember how that institution, which was founded in the fifteenth century by the notorious Pomponio Leto, used to hold its meetings in one of the catacombs. Under Paul II the members

were arrested and tried for heresy, but nothing could be actually proved against them, and afterwards they were supposed by their contemporaries to have reformed. We know now that in reality things went from bad to worse. The study of paganism led them on to the worship of Satan, and eventually suspicion was again aroused, and a further investigation ordered.

“Sir Hubert got wind of this in time, however, so he availed himself of his position in the household of the Imperial Ambassador, and quietly retired to Naples. There he lived till he was over eighty, and no one in England ever expected him to return. But he did so, bringing with him a great store of books and manuscripts, some pictures, and this piece of plate; and he died and was buried here in the last decade of the sixteenth century.

“His nephew, who came in for the estates on his death, was a devout Catholic, and had been educated at St Omers. He made short work with Sir Hubert’s manuscripts, most of which he burned, as being heretical or worse, but he spared one volume, which contains an inventory of the things brought from Naples. Among the items mentioned is this fountain. In fact, it has a whole page to itself, with a little sketch and a note of its attribution to Cellini, besides some other words, which I have never been able to make out. But I think it is clear that the crystal was used for evil

purposes, and that is why I dislike seeing it on the table. If Avison had asked me, I should have forbidden him to produce it."

"Then I am ver' glad he did not ask you, mein Herr," observed the German, bluntly, "for I should not then have seen him. But this inventory you speak of, is it permitted that I study it?"

"Certainly, Herr Aufrecht," replied the squire, and walking to one of the bookcases, he unlocked the glass doors and took out a small volume, bound in faded red leather with gilt ornaments.

"This is the book," he said; "I will find you the page with the sketch," and a minute later he handed the volume to the professor. I glanced across and saw a little drawing, unquestionably depicting the piece of plate before us, with some lines of writing beneath; the whole in faded ink, almost the colour of rust.

The professor's lens came out again and, with its aid, he read out the description beneath the picture.

" 'Item. *Vasculum argenteum, crystallo ornatum in quattuor statuas imposito. Opus Benevenuti, aurificis clarissimi. Quo crystallo Romæ in ritibus nostris pontifex noster Pomponius olim uti solebat.*' " \*

"Well, that sounds conclusive enough," said

\* "Item. A vessel of silver, adorned with a crystal supported on four statuettes. The work of Benvenuto, most famous of goldsmiths. This crystal our Pontiff Pomponius was wont to use in our rites at Rome in days gone by."

Father Bertrand, who had been listening intently. "*Opus Benevenuti, aurificis clarissimi*, could only mean Cellini; and the last sentence certainly sounds very suspicious, though it doesn't give one much to go upon as to the use made of the crystal."

"But there is more yet," broke in Herr Aufrecht, "it is in another script and much fainter." He peered into the page with eyes screwed up, and then exclaimed in surprise, "Why, it is Greek!"

"Indeed," said the squire, with interest, "that accounts for my failure to read it. I'm afraid I forgot all the Greek I ever knew as soon as I left school."

Meanwhile the professor had produced his pocket-book, and was jotting down the words as he deciphered them, while Father Bertrand and myself took the opportunity to examine the work on the little plaques which adorned the base of the fountain.

"I haf him all now," announced Herr Aufrecht, triumphantly, after a few minutes. "Listen and I will translate him to you," and after a little hesitation he read out the following:

"In the globe all truth is recorded, of the present, the past and the future.

To him that shall gaze it is shown; whosoever shall seek he shall find.

O Lucifer, star of the morn, give ear to the voice of thy servant,  
Enter and dwell in my heart, who adore thee as master and lord."

*Fabius Britannicus.*

"*Fabius Britannicus*," exclaimed the squire, as the professor ceased reading, "why, those are the words on the base of the pagan altar in the background of Sir Hubert's portrait!"

"I doubt not he was named *Fabius Britannicus* in the Accademia," answered the German; "all the members thereof did receive classical names in place of their own."

"It must be that," said the squire; "so he really was a worshipper of Satan. No wonder tradition paints him in such dark colours. But, why—of course," he burst out, "I see it all now, that explains everything."

We all looked up, surprised at his vehemence, but he kept silent, until Father Bertrand said gently:

"I think, Philip, you can tell us something more about all this; will you not do so?"

The old man hesitated for a little while and then answered: "Very well, if you wish it, you shall hear the story; but I must ask you to excuse me giving you the name. Although the principal actor in it has been dead many years now, I would rather keep his identity secret."

"When I was still quite a young man, and before I decided to take orders, I made friends in London with a man who was a spiritualist. He was on terms of intimacy with Home, the medium, and he himself possessed considerable gifts in the

same direction. He often pressed me to attend some of their séances, which I always refused to do, but our relations remained quite friendly, and at length he came down here on a visit to Stanton Rivers.

“The man was a journalist by profession, a critic and writer on matters artistic, so one evening, although we were quite alone at dinner, I told the butler, Avison’s predecessor, to put out the Cellini fountain for him to see. I did not warn him what to expect, as I wanted to get his unbiased opinion, but the moment he set eyes on it, he burst out in admiration, and, like our friend the professor to-night, he pronounced it to be unquestionably by Benvenuto himself.

“I said it was always believed to be his work, but purposely told him nothing about Sir Hubert, or my suspicions as to the original use of the crystal, and he did not question me about its history. As the meal advanced, however, he became curiously silent and self-absorbed. Sometimes I had to repeat what I was saying two or three times before he grasped the point; and I began to feel uncomfortable and anxious, so that it was a real relief when the butler put the decanters on the table and left us to ourselves.

“My friend was sitting on my right, at the side of the table, so that we could talk to each other more easily, and I noticed that he kept his gaze fixed on



the fountain in front of him. After all it was a very natural thing for him to do, and at first I did not connect his silence and distraction with the piece of plate.

"All at once he leaned forward until his eyes were not two feet away from the great crystal globe, into which he gazed with the deepest attention, as if fascinated. It is difficult to convey to you how intense and concentrated his manner became. It was as if he looked right into the heart of the globe—not *at* it, if you understand, but at something inside it, something beneath the surface, and that something of a compelling, absorbing nature which engrossed every fibre of his being in one act of profound attention.

"For a minute or two he sat like this in perfect silence, and I noticed the sweat beginning to stand out on his forehead, while his breath came audibly between his lips, under the strain. Then, all at once, I felt I must do something, and without stopping to deliberate I said in a loud tone, 'I command you to tell me what it is you see.'

"As I spoke, a kind of shiver ran through his frame, but his eyes never moved from the crystal ball. Then his lips moved, and after some seconds came a faint whisper, uttered as if with extreme difficulty, and what he said was something like this:

" 'There is a low, flat arch, with a kind of slab

beneath it, and a picture at the back. There is a cloth on the slab, and on the cloth a tall gold cup, and lying in front of it is a thin white disc. By the side is a monster, like a huge toad,' and he shuddered, 'but it is much too big to be a toad. It glistens, and its eyes have a cruel light in them. Oh, it is horrible!' Then all at once the voice leaped to a shrill note, and he spoke very rapidly, as if the scene were changing quicker than he could describe it.

" 'The man in front—the one with a cross on the back of his cloak—is holding a dagger in his hand. He raises it and strikes at the white disc. He has pierced it with the dagger. It bleeds! The white cloth beneath it is all red with blood. But the monster—some of the blood has fallen upon it as it spurted out, and the toad is writhing as if in agony. Ah! it leaps down from the slab, it is gone. All present rise up in confusion; there is a tumult. They rush away down the dark passages. Only one remains, the man with the cross on his back. He is lying insensible upon the ground. On the slab still stands the gold cup and white disc with the blood-stained cloth, and the picture behind——' and the voice sank to an inaudible whisper, as if the speaker were exhausted.

"Almost without thinking, I put a question to him before the sight should fade entirely. 'The picture, what is it like?' But instead of answering

he merely whispered '*Irene, da calda,*' and fell back as if exhausted in his chair."

There was silence for a few moments.

"And your friend, the spiritualist," began Father Bertrand, "could he tell you nothing more of what he saw?"

"I did not ask him," answered the old priest, "for, when he came to himself, he seemed quite ignorant of what he had told me during his trance. But, some years afterwards, I got some further light on the incident, and that in quite an unexpected way. Just wait a minute, and I will show you what I believe to be the picture he saw at the back of the niche!" And the old man walked to one of the bookcases and selected a large folio volume.

"The picture I am going to show you is an exact copy of one of the frescoes in the catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, where I came upon it, quite unexpectedly, during my period in Rome as a student; it has been reproduced since by Lanciani in one of his books.\* Ah, here it is," and he laid the album on the table.

There, before us, was a copy of an undeniable catacomb fresco depicting an "agape" or love-feast; a group of figures symbolical both of the Last Supper and the communion of the elect. Above it were the contemporary inscriptions, "IRENE DA

\* See Frontispiece, from Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 357 (London, 1895).

CALDA " and " AGAPE MISCE MI," while round about were scrawled, in characters evidently much more recent, a number of names: " POMPONIUS, FABIANUS, RUFFUS, LETUS, VOLSCUS, FABIUS " and others, all of them members of the notorious Academy. There they had written them in charcoal, and there they still remain to-day, as evidence how the innermost recesses of a Christian catacomb were profaned, and the cult of Satan practised there, by the neo-pagans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

We sat looking at the picture in silence for a minute or so, and then Herr Aufrecht turned to the Dominican.

" Fra Bertrand," he said, " you are Master in *Theologia*, what is your opinion of all this ?"

The friar hesitated for a moment before he answered.

" Well, Herr Aufrecht," he said at length, " the Church has never ceased to teach the possibility of diabolical possession, and for my part I see no reason why a thing," and he pointed to the crystal, " should not become ' possessed ' in much the same way as a person can. But if you ask my opinion on the practical side of the question, I should say that, since Father Philip here cannot legally part with his heirloom, he certainly acts wisely in keeping it under lock and key."

## A PORTA INFERI

**P**ROFESSOR AUFRECHT returned to London next day and I went with him as far as the junction, where I had some shopping to do, so I saw nothing of the squire and the old Dominican Father until the evening. After dinner we were talking in the library when Avison came in and removed the coffee cups.

“I’m always a little afraid of Avison,” remarked Father Bertrand confidentially, as the butler disappeared with his tray, “he makes me feel as if I must be on my best behaviour, like a schoolboy when the Headmaster is present.”

“I know what you mean,” answered the squire, “I used to feel much the same with old Wilson, Avison’s predecessor. But then, you see, Wilson once caught me in the pantry, eating the dessert, when I was supposed to be safely in bed in the nursery; and even after I became a priest and his master I felt that he half suspected I should be up to the same trick again, if he wasn’t on his guard! Now with Avison it is different; you see, he has only been here about thirty years, whereas Wilson was butler before I was born.”

"Is it really thirty years since Wilson died?" asked Father Bertrand—"but yes, I suppose it must be. He was a splendid old man. I always used to think of him as a retainer, 'servant' was much too undignified a term for him. On my first visit here I remember feeling that he was taking stock of me, and that, if I didn't pass muster, he would not allow you to ask me down again. Was it all my imagination, Philip, or did he exercise a veto on your visiting list?"

"Oh no," laughed the squire, "Wilson would never have taken such a liberty, but I must admit he contrived to let me know what he thought of my friends. Don't be afraid, Bertrand, you passed with honours on the very first occasion. 'Quite a gentleman, sir, the young Dominican Father,' was his verdict. Dear old Wilson, I can hear him say it now."

"Doesn't Thackeray say somewhere that to win the approval of a butler is the highest test of good breeding?" I asked.

"I don't remember that," answered the squire, "though I think he says that to look like a butler is the safest thing for a political leader, as it always suggests respectability. All the same, I came to trust Wilson's judgement, and it often stood me in good stead as a young man. But it is strange we should have got upon the subject to-night, for the only time I ever came near a quarrel with him was



about his opinion of my friend the spiritualist, whose story I told you yesterday. The old butler took a strong dislike to him during his first visit here, and after he left we had quite a little scene. Wilson literally begged me not to make an intimate of him, and I remember getting annoyed with the old man and telling him sharply to mind his own business. He took the rebuke like a lamb and begged my pardon for venturing to speak in such a way to me, 'But you can't tell, Mr. Philip,' he added, 'what it means to me to see a man like that among your friends.' "

"I meant to ask you what became of the spiritualist," said Father Bertrand, "but it slipped my memory. Was the incident you told us the only thing of the kind, or did you come across any other examples of his faculty?"

"Well," answered the squire, with a little hesitation, "perhaps you'll laugh at me, but old Wilson's opinion impressed me more than I cared to admit to him, and not long afterwards some facts came to my knowledge which went a long way to confirm it. In consequence I let our intimacy cool, and soon afterwards the man left England altogether, and I only met him once again, quite by accident, many years later." He paused for a moment, and then continued. "If you like I will tell you what happened on that occasion. The whole affair was over in a few hours, but while it lasted it was so

startling that I have often thanked God since that I followed Wilson's advice and did not allow our former intimacy to develop.

"The incident I told you last night must have occurred about the year 1858, and the man passed out of my life within a year or so after that. Still, I never saw the Cellini fountain without it bringing him back to my mind, and I often wondered idly what had happened to him. I never heard a word about him, however, and in time I came to think he must be dead.

"More than twenty years later I was supplying at a mission on the outskirts of a large manufacturing town in the North. The place was not more than two or three miles from the heart of the city, but it was practically in the country, and the only exceptional feature about my work was the fact that I had to visit a large lunatic asylum which stood within the parish. The building had originally been the mansion of a county family, but they had died out, and when the property came into the market it was bought by the Corporation, and the mansion itself had been added to and adapted to serve its new purpose. There were a few Catholics among the inmates, and I found that one of the doctors was a Catholic too, so we soon became very good friends. One afternoon, as I was leaving the asylum, he asked me to go and have tea in his rooms. These were in a wing of the original building, where I had

never been before, and his windows looked out on an old formal garden.

“ ‘ Why,’ I exclaimed, ‘ I thought I had seen all the grounds, but this part is quite new to me.’

“ ‘ Yes, it would be,’ he replied. ‘ You see, we have to keep the more serious cases separate from the others, and this part of the grounds is in their enclosure. If you like we will go round the old garden after tea; there probably won’t be more than one or two patients in it, and it will be all right if I go with you.’

“ To tell the truth I was always a little uneasy when I went among the patients, even the harmless ones, but my glimpse of the garden made me long to see it all; so I accepted the offer, and when tea was over we walked down on to the terrace beneath. The place had been laid out with great skill in the eighteenth century, and the paved walks with their old stone parapets and vases made an exquisite setting to the beds of bright flowers, relieved here and there by yew trees, clipped into fantastic shapes. There was not a soul about, and I quite forgot my uneasiness until we passed through an opening in a tall hedge at the bottom of the slope and came out on to a lawn beyond. At one end of this was a little pool, and my heart gave a great thump as I looked at it, for kneeling by the side, so that his profile was turned towards us, was a man whose face was perfectly familiar. It was my former

friend the spiritualist, and, except that his shoulders were bent and his hair absolutely white, his appearance had scarcely changed in all the years, so that I recognized him in an instant. But it was not the surprise of meeting him thus unexpectedly which made me catch my breath and held me speechless. What sent the blood back to my heart, and then made it surge to the brain in a great wave of pity, was his occupation; for carefully, with earnest gaze and rapt attention, he knelt there building castles in the mud ! The doctor must have noticed that I was upset, for he took my arm, as if to lead me back again, when I stopped him.

“ ‘ No, no, Doctor,’ I whispered, ‘ I’m not frightened; it isn’t that. But the man kneeling there, I used to know him well, I am certain of it.’ ”

“ ‘ Indeed,’ he whispered back, ‘ he is the most curious case we have here—quite a mystery, in fact. I must get you to tell me what you know about him.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, certainly,’ I answered, ‘ but I want to speak to him. He may turn and recognize me at any moment, and I do not want him to think I have come to spy upon him.’ ”

“ ‘ You are right,’ he replied, ‘ and if you can only gain his confidence it may be of great importance, for he is a case of lost identity, and your old friendship may perhaps revive his memory, and reconnect him with the vanished past.’ With this he led me up to where the man was kneeling,

but he never turned nor seemed to notice our presence, until the doctor addressed him in a loud voice.

“ ‘Come now, Lushington,’ he said, ‘I’ve brought an old friend to see you. Look up and see if you don’t recognize him.’ Very slowly, as if with an effort, the kneeling figure raised its head and turned towards us; but slow as the movement was, it barely gave me time to recover from my surprise, for the doctor had addressed him by a name that was utterly unlike the one he had formerly borne, and yet here he was answering to it, as if it were his own!

“ ‘I wonder if you can recognize me after all these years?’ I asked him, when he had gazed at me in silence for some moments without the smallest sign of recognition.

“ ‘Recognize yer? No, I’m shot if I do,’ he said at length; and I got another surprise, for the words were spoken in a hard, vulgar voice, totally different from the quiet, refined speech of my former friend.

“ ‘Think again, Lushington,’ said the doctor, ‘for this gentleman is quite right, he used to know you well many years ago.’ With a scowl the man turned upon him angrily:

“ ‘What the blazes do you know about it, you little body-snatcher?’ he snarled. ‘I’ll trouble you to mind your own business. As if you knew anything about me and what I was “many years

ago." I wouldn't have spoken to you then, and wouldn't now, but that you've got me locked in this infernal prison of yours.'

" 'It must be fully twenty years since last you saw me,' I said gently, for I wanted to calm him down if possible, 'and I was a layman then, so my dress has changed as well as my appearance; but I hoped you might recollect my face.'

" 'I don't, anyhow,' said he, though with less confidence I thought, as if some faint glimmer of memory were returning; 'but you says you're sure you know me, eh? Dick Lushington?'

" 'Quite sure of it,' I answered. 'But I must admit one thing. When I knew you, twenty years ago, you were not called Dick Lushington, but . . . ' and I spoke the man's real name, which I had known him by. The effect was instantaneous and almost terrifying. No sooner had the words passed my lips than he leaped to his feet, shaking with passion. His face became livid with rage, he foamed at the mouth, and I thought he was going to have a fit.

" 'Liar, liar, liar!' he shrieked in my face. 'How dare you say it? It isn't true—by Hell, I swear it isn't! He's dead, the blackguard that you say I am—I won't soil my lips by repeating his filthy name—and now you'll be saying I killed him. You devil, why don't you say it? It's a lie, of course, but so's what you said before—lies, lies, lies everywhere!' and the madman dropped to his knees



again and drove his fingers deep into the mud. I noticed now that there was a warder standing behind us, and saw the doctor make a sign to him.

“ ‘Come away, Father,’ he whispered to me, ‘we must give him time to calm down. The warder will look after him, and he will recover more quickly if we go away;’ and taking my arm again he led me back towards the mansion. When we had passed through the hedge and were well out of earshot, the doctor began to speak again.

“ ‘I’m afraid the experiment was not a great success, Father,’ he said. ‘I’ve never seen Lushington lose his self-control so suddenly, and the worst of it is that his heart is in a terrible state, so an outbreak like this is liable to prove fatal.’

“ ‘It certainly was a terrible thing to witness,’ I answered; ‘but I’m not so sure we weren’t successful in one respect. You are an expert in these matters and I know nothing about them, but surely the fact is clear now that he still knows his real name although he wishes others to be kept in ignorance of it.’

“ ‘Certainly,’ answered the doctor; ‘but how does that help us, Father?’

“ ‘First let me tell you what I can about his past life, in the days when I knew him,’ I answered, ‘and then you can say if my idea of his case is a possible one.’

“We had reached the house now, and when we

were in the doctor's sitting-room again I told him all I knew. Put shortly it was this. When I first met Lushington—I will use that name, if you don't mind, as there is no reason for disclosing his identity—he was a young man, well educated, with a comfortable private income of his own, and moving in good society in London, which was only natural, for he came of an excellent family. He was then beginning to dabble in spiritualism, and had been introduced to Home, the famous medium. For my part I tried to dissuade him from this, and always refused to attend any of their séances, though he often urged me to, but he ignored my advice and became more and more absorbed in his pursuit, as he found that he himself possessed special gifts as a medium; in fact, Home often urged him to devote his whole life to 'the Cause,' as he liked to call it. I also told the doctor the story you heard last night—I mean what happened here, when I brought out the Cellini fountain for him to see—and how, later on, his reputation had become an undesirable one and he had left the country, since when I had heard and seen nothing of him until that afternoon; and then I asked to be told the circumstances which led to his incarceration in the asylum. The doctor hesitated for a little before he answered.

“ ‘ Well, Father,’ said he, ‘ you know we are not allowed to let such facts be known outside the staff,

but I think you may be considered as one of ourselves. Not that there's much to tell in any case, for, as I told you, Lushington is our enigma. He was brought here about five years ago by the solicitor of a well-known public man, the head of the family to which he belongs; but even the family lawyer could tell us very little. His residence abroad, which you mentioned just now, must have terminated quite ten years ago, for he had been living in Belfast for five years or so before he came here. For a long time before that he had had no personal dealings with his relatives, but they kept in touch with him through the family solicitors, who used to send him a cheque for his half-year's income every six months, which cheques he always acknowledged.

“‘The arrangement suited both sides, for Lushington wished to avoid his family, and I gathered that they returned the feeling, though I did not learn why; but what you say about his career as a medium no doubt supplies the explanation. However, shortly before he came here, instead of the customary formal note acknowledging their cheque, the solicitors received a long letter, full of foul language and abuse, with a deliberate accusation of dishonesty on their part, and a threat of legal proceedings for breach of trust and misappropriation of his money. The charge was manifestly absurd, but as the chief trustee was the public man

I have mentioned, he could not run the risk of leaving such a charge unanswered, so one of the firm was sent over to Ireland to see Lushington and investigate the affair.

“ ‘ He arrived in Belfast to find that his man had been arrested the day before on a criminal charge, but on examination he was found to be hopelessly insane. The solicitor obtained full powers to act on behalf of the family, and he was brought here soon afterwards. But now comes the strange part of the affair. As you know, one element in his case is that of lost identity. The man insists that he is Dick Lushington, and either refuses to admit that he ever bore his real name, or else, as to-day, maintains that the man who bore it is dead. What makes this feature of his case so odd is that, years ago, a man called Dick Lushington really lived in Belfast. He was a notorious bad lot, cunning and unscrupulous, an habitual criminal, in fact, who served numerous terms in gaol, and, when out of it, was leader of the worst gang of ruffians in the city. Finally he committed murder, and, failing to escape, took his own life to avoid being arrested and hanged. But the oddest part of it all is this, that the real Dick Lushington killed himself *nearly thirty years ago*, long before our patient ever went to Belfast—in fact, while he was still quite young and respectable; yet one of the senior police officials there, who saw the man before he came here, declares that his

voice and manner, his tricks of speech and choice of oaths, are identical with those of the notorious criminal Lushington, whose name this poor wretch has adopted, but whom he never can have seen!

“ ‘Extraordinary,’ I said, ‘it sounds like a case of possession;’ but as I was speaking a knock came at the door and a warder entered.

“ ‘Beg pardon, sir,’ he said, addressing the doctor, ‘but I came to report about Lushington. After you and the other gentleman left the garden he calmed down, and I got him to come in quietly to his room. When he got there, he threw himself on the bed like one exhausted and began to cry, at the same time talking to himself in his other voice—you know what I mean, sir—like a gentleman. After a bit he called me up and said:

“ ‘ “Tell him I want to see him.”

“ ‘ “Tell who?” says I.

“ ‘ “Why, Philip, of course,” says he—“the gentleman who was in the garden just now.”

“ ‘ “Well, sir, I didn’t want to bother you with his nonsense, so I said I thought the gentleman was gone; but no, he wouldn’t have it.

“ ‘ “Go and see,” says he, and, try as I would, I couldn’t put him off it. At last I said I’d go and see, so here I am, sir.’

“ ‘ “And a good thing too,” exclaimed the doctor impatiently. ‘I only hope we shall not be too

late, and find the quiet mood has passed. Come, Father, this is important. If Lushington is still in this state, you may be able to do something with him.'

" 'By all means, let us go at once,' I said, rising, and we hurried off to the poor creature's cell, which the doctor and myself entered, leaving the warder outside, with instructions to come in at once if either of us called. The man was lying on his bed, apparently in a state of extreme exhaustion, but as we entered he turned his head to see who we were, and a great sigh escaped his lips.

" 'Oh, Philip, come to me,' he murmured faintly, and I hastened to the bedside and took both his hands in mine.

" 'After all these years, to see you once again,' he said, almost in a whisper. 'Oh, Philip, if I had but taken your advice!' I pressed his fingers in my own, hardly daring to speak, and he lay silent, with eyes closed, for quite a minute. Then, all at once, his eyes opened, and he turned to me with a quick glance of terror.

" 'Take me away with you, Philip,' he cried, 'quickly, before the other one comes back!' and he flung his arms round me like a frightened child. Gently I laid him back upon the bed, supporting the poor feeble body in my arms, and tried to reassure him.

" 'You're all safe now, old fellow,' I whispered



gently. 'He won't come back while I am here, no chance of it.'

" 'Oh, do you think so?' he answered eagerly. 'Then—why—then you must never leave me. My God! how I hate him, devil that he is; and oh, to think I let him in so willingly!'

" 'We'll keep him out together, you and I, never fear of that,' I assured him bravely, though, even as I spoke, I was wondering what in the world it all meant; and then I added foolishly, 'Tell me, who is he?'

" 'Who is he?' he almost shrieked, his terror returning more intensely than before. 'Who is he? Why, Dick Lushington, of course—the devil-man, who gets inside and uses me. He uses me, I tell you, like a slave. My hands, my limbs, my brain, my will, he's got it all, all of me, at his mercy. The filthy, hateful devil that he is, and did it by pretending to be my friend.'

" 'Hush, hush, be calm,' I said, 'you will exhaust yourself. Be calm, he won't come back while I am here. You see, I am a priest now, did you know it? I promise you, you will be safe with me.'

" 'Thank God for that,' he said more calmly, 'but oh, Philip, don't forsake me. I shan't last long now, I shan't keep you long. You were my friend once, be my saviour now. Promise me you'll be with me at the end. Don't leave me here to die, alone with him.'

“ ‘ I promise you faithfully that I will do everything in my power to help you,’ I answered solemnly; ‘ but now you must rest yourself, and try to sleep,’ and I laid his head back on the pillow, taking his hand in mine again, while he closed his eyes.

“ ‘ I will do anything—anything you tell me,’ he whispered, ‘ only forsake me not, or I am lost.’ Then he lay still, and in less than five minutes, to my amazement, the grip on my hand relaxed, his fingers fell back, and he was sleeping like a child. The doctor crept to the door and beckoned the warder in.

“ ‘ Stay here by the bedside,’ he ordered, ‘ and if he wakes up, say to him at once, “ Father Philip is still here and will come if you require him.” If he says he does, pull the bell which communicates with my room.’ Then he touched my arm and led me away on tip-toe along the gallery.

“ ‘ Well,’ I said, at length, when we had reached the doctor’s room, ‘ I don’t know what you think, but to my mind it seems a clear case of possession. I have heard of other similar cases among spiritualists.’

“ ‘ It certainly does look like it,’ he admitted; ‘ but I am more concerned as to the immediate treatment than I am to explain the origin of his malady. Do you realize, my dear Father, what you have taken upon yourself ?’

“ ‘ You mean by promising to do all I can for him?’ I asked.

“ ‘I mean by intervening in the case at all,’ he answered grimly. ‘The man’s life is in your hands now, and if you fail him, if you are not at hand whenever he calls for you, I think the consequences will probably be fatal!’

“ ‘I shall certainly not shirk the consequences of my promise,’ I answered; ‘but did you notice what he said to me?’ ‘I shan’t last long now, promise me you’ll be with me at the end.’ I may be wrong, but if he is convinced that he is dying, is it not more than probable that he will do so?’

“ ‘Well, yes,’ admitted the doctor, ‘there is something in that. In fact, if he gets another paroxysm, like you saw in the garden, I do not think he will survive it. But short of that, I shouldn’t be surprised if he were to linger on for some time, or even for several weeks.’

“ ‘If he does, I shall have to make some arrangement about the parish work,’ I answered, ‘but my own belief is that he won’t last many hours. I have learned to trust the instincts of a dying man.’ We talked for some time longer on the point, each of us maintaining his own view, without convincing the other.

“ ‘Well, I only hope you may be right,’ said the doctor, at length; ‘for many reasons it will be better so. Still, speaking merely from a professional point of view, I see no reason why——’ but his words were cut short by the clash of a bell,

ringing violently in the adjoining bedroom. The doctor leaped to his feet, and ran to the door between the two rooms.

“ ‘ No. 17 ! ’ he exclaimed, ‘ it is Lushington’s cell. Come, Father ’—and once more we hurried down the corridor. As we entered the room I could scarce believe my eyes. The man we had left, not half an hour before, in a state of utter collapse was on the floor kneeling over the prostrate figure of the warder, who was trying to tear away the fingers of the maniac, which were tightly fastened on his throat. The doctor flung himself upon the kneeling man. The weight of the charge knocked him backwards, enabling the warder to rise. The madman’s arms shot out, but luckily I caught one of his wrists, and the warder, a big, powerful man, soon captured the other.

“ ‘ The handcuffs, in my pocket—quick, Doctor,’ he cried, ‘ get ’em out while we turn him over ! ’—and in a few seconds we had the poor wretch secured, with his wrists handcuffed behind his back. He went on struggling until the warder had got his ankles fettered with a strap, but the three of us were too much for him, and in a minute or so he was lying, safely pinioned, on the bed. All this while he had never spoken, though his breath came in great gasps that shook his whole frame; now, at length, he seemed calmer, and I thought it time to speak.

“ ‘ You’re all right now, old fellow,’ I said gently, ‘ don’t be afraid; it is I, Philip—I am here as I promised.’ The man turned his eyes upon me, and the look of hatred in them was appalling.

“ ‘ All right, am I ?’ he shrieked savagely. ‘ If it wasn’t for these —— handcuffs, I’d soon show yer I’m all right. A nice, mean, low sort of priest’s trick to play on me. Thought you’d get hold of yer old pal, and pilot him into heaven while number one was out, did yer ? Bah !’—and he spat at me—‘ you dirty swine !’

“ ‘ Ask the warder to wait outside, Doctor,’ I said, for a sudden inspiration came to me; and the man withdrew at his command.

“ ‘ What yer going to do now, curse ye—sing a hymn ?’ sneered the madman on the bed, as I took my breviary from my pocket. Without answering I turned to the prayers for the dying, and, kneeling down, began to recite them aloud and slowly, while the thing that animated my poor friend’s body gave a shriek of malicious hatred.

“ The scene that followed was literally indescribable, but I stuck to my task, and, as calmly as I could manage, went through the litanies and all the prayers for a departing soul; while the thing on the bed jerked itself from side to side, so far as the fastenings would allow, and the harsh, strident voice of Dick Lushington, the long-dead murderer, howled oaths, sang filthy songs, hurled

curses at my head, and poured forth blasphemies unspeakable. As I reached the end of the prayers the question arose in my mind, 'What shall I do now?' when, all at once, a strange phenomenon occurred. It seemed as if some mighty force took hold of me, overpowering my limbs, my will, and all my faculties, so that I no more controlled my soul or body, but simply yielded myself up to serve. I was conscious that I had risen to my feet and was standing beside the bed. Then, in a tone of stern command, I heard my own voice speak the words, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, I command thee, thou evil spirit, to go out of him !'

"The body on the bed gave one tremendous heave, as if to break the bands with which it was fettered, and then fell back with a cry of baffled rage and frenzy, such as I never heard before and never wish to hear again. Then, gradually, before my astonished gaze, the face that was all distorted with anger grew calm, the purple flesh and swollen veins became deadly pale, and the eyes which looked up at me were no longer those of a madman, but the eyes of my long-lost friend. Then the lips moved feebly, and I caught a faint whisper.

" 'God bless you, Philip, you have saved me ! Jesus, be merciful to me a sinner.'

"The voice died away, one great sigh shook the



frame of the dying man, and I quickly gave him the last absolution. There was silence for a minute or so, and then the doctor stepped forward.

“ ‘You may come away now, Father,’ he said softly. ‘You have kept your promise. He is dead.’ ”

## THE TREASURE OF THE BLUE NUNS

THE afternoon was a hopeless one, with driving rain and a bitter wind, which effectually prevented the old priest from getting out for his daily constitutional; so after lunch he announced his intention of doing an afternoon's work in the chapel, a favourite expedient of his for rainy days. I volunteered to help him, and we were soon at work.

"I want to have all the relics out of their cupboard," he said, as he unlocked the carved oak doors of a tall aumbry at the north side of the little sanctuary. "Then we will get one of the maids to dust it out thoroughly, while we go over the reliquaries and clean them up a little. It struck me the other day that the place smelt rather fusty, and it must be quite a year since it had a regular cleaning."

The collection of relics at Stanton Rivers is a remarkable one, especially rich in memorials of the English martyrs, to whom the squire cherishes a great devotion, and the task of polishing the glass and silver of the numerous reliquaries kept us busy until it was time for tea. The old priest spoke little during the afternoon's work, but as we were putting

the last of the relics into place again he turned to me with a smile.

"If you will remind me later," he said, "I will tell you another of my stories. It shall be your reward for working so hard this afternoon;" and I noticed, as he spoke, that he took out a long envelope from the drawer in which were kept the papers authenticating the various relics. Then he locked the doors again and we went downstairs together. When tea was over and we had settled down before the fire in the library, I claimed the fulfilment of his promise.

"I don't think you have ever been to Mallerton," he began; "it is a big convent of enclosed nuns in the Midlands."

"No, sir," I said, "but I have heard of it; is it not one of the old foundations which were established abroad during the penal times?"

"Yes, certainly," he replied, "the convent was formerly at Paris. You remember the other day, when we had out the family pedigree, how one or two of the Rivers ladies were marked 'a blue nun at Paris.' Well, that is the same foundation, only the nuns returned to England at the time of the French Revolution and finally settled at Mallerton.

"Some years ago I used to go there fairly often, to give retreats, attend professions, and so on, and the incident I am going to tell you about happened

on one of these occasions. It must have been some time in the eighties. I had been working very hard for many months previously, and really did not feel equal to the task; for the effort of giving three discourses a day for eight days is far more fatiguing than most people would suppose. However, I did not want to disappoint the nuns, and as I was going to have a good holiday as soon as it was over, I began the retreat in spite of my condition.

"Within a couple of days it was clear that I was really unwell, but I struggled on till the fourth or fifth morning, when I found, on rising, that I could scarcely stand; so I reluctantly abandoned the retreat and sent for the doctor. It happened that he could not get out to see me until the afternoon, by which time I was in a high fever, so he insisted on sending for a trained nurse to attend me. The nuns' chaplain wired to London, and late that evening two nursing sisters came down to Mallerton, the Abbess kindly arranging for them to be put up in the convent when not actually waiting upon me.

"Next morning I was no better. During the day my temperature rose still higher, and the good nuns began to be seriously alarmed about me. Later on I learned that they arranged to keep up a continual chain of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for me; taking it in turns to watch for an hour at a time, without a break by day or night. For my

part I do not doubt that what happened was due in no small degree to their prayers, for I have known too many cases in which the combined prayers of contemplative religious have worked marvels to doubt about the reality of their power with the Giver of all mercies.

“That evening, when the chaplain came to see me, he brought a message from the Lady Abbess to the effect that she had sent me over ‘the pillow,’ and begged me to use it, as she had great faith in its efficacy. With this he produced a flattish, oblong cushion, covered with white linen, explaining that the nuns always used to put this under the pillows of any of their number who got ill, and that they firmly believed the convent tradition, which said that a great improvement in the invalid’s condition often followed its use. I remember that he added some words of apology for bothering me about what he called ‘a regular nun’s superstition,’ but the Abbess had made him promise to bring it over and ask me to use it. I was not in a state to care one way or the other about such a thing, so I merely said, ‘Oh yes, if they wish it’; the nurse slipped it gently under my pillow, and in a few moments the matter passed out of my mind completely.

“For the two previous nights I had scarcely slept at all, but that evening I must have fallen asleep soon after ten o’clock. My slumbers, however, were far from unbroken, for I woke up at

frequent intervals, and all night long a succession of vivid dreams kept chasing one another through my brain. Naturally enough in such circumstances, some of them were not a little fantastic, but the strange thing was that, without exception, they all concerned themselves with the penal times and with incidents of persecution.

“In one I found myself going about in disguise, so that my priestly character might not be known, sleeping in secret hiding places, and celebrating Mass at midnight, in an attic with thickly curtained windows. In another I kept hurrying from place to place for fear of the pursuivants; now hearing confessions in a stable, now preaching in a tavern with a pipe of tobacco in my hand and a mug of beer at my elbow. In a third my disguise had changed, and I was a travelling tinker, going from house to house encouraging the faithful, smuggling Catholic books about the country beneath the pots and pans in my pack, and administering the Sacraments whenever and wherever I dared, regardless of the law which made it a crime to do so. Then suddenly the scene changed, and I found myself on board ship working as one of the crew, so as to escape the difficulty of entering or leaving the country without the official papers, which, as a priest, I could not possibly obtain. In that dream I remember being very much alarmed by the action of one of my fellow sailors, who seemed to be



constantly watching me, so that I feared he must suspect my true character; until one of the crew chanced to fall overboard, when both of us simultaneously pronounced the short form of absolution, each thus betraying himself to the other, to our mutual relief.

“In one dream I found myself in prison, arrested on suspicion of being a priest, and it seemed to me that I was kept there for months, expecting to be brought to trial at any moment. Even now, after all these years, I could draw you an exact picture of the bare, narrow cell, with walls, roof, and floor all of stone, and its tiny window heavily barred, so vividly did every detail impress itself upon my brain. From this my mind jerked off and I found myself one of the crowd at Tyburn, assembled to witness the execution of two Catholic priests. There, before me, was the triple gibbet—the famous Tyburn tree—and by its side a great fire of faggots already lighted, to consume the heart and entrails of the martyrs after they had been hanged and quartered.

“Presently a loud shout announced that the sheriff and his victims were approaching. The crowd parted to make room for them, and the hurdles, with the holy men fast bound upon them, were dragged past me so close that I could have touched them with my hand. Then, before my eyes, I saw the whole ghastly tragedy enacted. The two priests were

cut loose from the hurdles and lifted into an open cart beneath the gibbet, while the sheriff at their side denounced them to the crowd as traitors to their country and guilty of plotting against the life of His Majesty the King.

“At this one of the holy men gently protested, declaring that they were no traitors, nor did they wish aught but good to His Majesty, whom they prayed God daily to preserve. On hearing this the crowd cheered, but when he went on to add that he was guilty of no crime, unless it were a crime to serve God in the way his ancestors and theirs had done for centuries, the soldiers of the guard and the sheriff’s men all shouted out together, so that the crowd should hear no more. When the noise had subsided, the sheriff bade him be brief if he wished to say more, and the condemned man humbly begged all present to pray for him and for his companion.

“‘And know ye,’ he added, ‘it grieveth us not at all to die, if so be God’s most holy will, but rather it rejoiceth us greatly, seeing that he calleth us to him by so sure a road. For as at first the blessed apostles and martyrs by their blood-shedding sowed the seeds of Christ’s Church throughout the world, even so, doubt ye not, the blood of us martyrs—albeit unworthy to be ranked with them—will bring forth in God’s own time a rare harvest in this our land of England.’

"At this the sheriff angrily bade him be silent. The hangman quickly placed the ropes about their necks. A sharp cut of the whip made the horse plunge forward, leaving the two bodies hanging; and I awoke with a cry, to find myself in a violent perspiration.

"The sound of my voice brought the nurse to my side in a moment.

"'What is the matter, Father?' she asked anxiously. 'Do you want anything?'

"For a few moments I was quite unable to answer. My mind was still full of my dream, and I could scarcely believe it had not all been real, so wonderfully vivid were the images aroused. Gradually, I took in the situation. My eyes recognized the things around me, and I recollected that some time or other, seemingly quite long ago, I had gone to bed in that room feeling wretchedly weak and ill.

"One thing, however, was absolutely clear to me. Whatever had been my condition when I went to bed, I felt perfectly well and strong now, and I told the nurse so, adding that I would get up soon and say Mass; for I noticed that it was broad daylight. Of course, the good sister simply refused to believe me, but when I persistently maintained my point, she took my temperature and found it normal. This, at any rate, bore out my contention, and I persuaded her to go and ask the chaplain to come to me.

“ When she was gone, I got out of bed, and though I half expected to be weak on my legs, I found myself perfectly steady and apparently in normal health. The nurse was away some little while, and when she returned with the chaplain I was half dressed, nor could the two of them persuade me to go to bed again. I said Mass without the least difficulty, had breakfast, and was walking in the garden outside the presbytery when the doctor arrived. At first he was horrified to see me there, but when at length I convinced him that I was quite well again, he said something about a mistake in his diagnosis and went away in an amusingly ungracious manner, as if I had imposed upon him in some way.

“ When he had gone, I went to the parlour and asked to see the Lady Abbess, for, of course, the nuns had heard of my astonishing recovery already. She came, accompanied by the Prioress, and I told them all I could remember about the affair, adding that it seemed like a miracle, for there could be no doubt that I had been very seriously ill only a few hours earlier.

“ ‘ My dear Father Philip,’ she said, to my surprise, ‘ it is simply the effect of our pillow. -We have a number of cases on record where it has produced a cure as rapid and miraculous as yours.’

“ I had quite forgotten about the pillow, and for a moment or two could not grasp her meaning. Then,

all at once, the incident of the previous evening came back to my mind, and I cried abruptly:

“ ‘Do you mean that little flat cushion, which the chaplain brought over last night and put under my head?’

“ ‘Precisely,’ she answered, smiling; ‘it has often worked such a cure in the case of our own sisters who have been ill. We look upon it as our greatest treasure.’

“ ‘But what is it?’ I asked her. ‘You cannot possibly attribute miraculous powers to a mere cushion! It would be grossly superstitious.’

“ ‘We believe it to contain relics, Father,’ she replied. ‘But as to what they are, we have no record. We know that it was brought over from Paris, when our convent returned to England, but it has never been opened so far as we know, and there is a strong tradition in the house against doing so.’

“ ‘Well, I think the tradition is a bad one,’ I answered bluntly. ‘It seems to me to run very close on superstition. If there are relics in the pillow, you will lose nothing by being certain of it; and if there are not any, then it is far best that the tradition to that effect should die.’

“ ‘We talked the matter over for some time, but I could not bring the two nuns round to my way of thinking. In the end, however, the Abbess was so far shaken that she agreed to submit the point to

the Bishop of the diocese, promising to be guided by his opinion; and both of us wrote to him on the matter that evening. His answer came in a couple of days' time, and the Abbess brought it to the parlour for me to read. I found that the Bishop took the same view as I had done, only rather more strongly; and while he refrained from laying any absolute command upon the nuns in regard to opening the pillow, he stated it as his definite wish that this should be done. He also gave permission for the chaplain and myself to enter the enclosure of the convent, so that we should be present at the examination, and directed us to draw up a formal report for him on the result of our search. I wanted to get away the following morning, so the Abbess proposed to have the investigation that afternoon, in the presence of all the community.

“After lunch, therefore, the chaplain and myself were admitted inside the grille and conducted to the chapter-house, where we found the Abbess and community awaiting us in their stalls. In the centre of the room they had placed two chairs for us and a small table, on which were lying a knife, a pair of scissors, and the pillow. First of all the Abbess asked me to tell the whole community what I had experienced on the night when I had been cured, so I related in detail what I have already told you. She then explained how I had urged her to open the pillow, for fear lest any superstition



might gather round its mysterious character, and how, when the matter was referred to the Bishop of the diocese, he had taken the same view. She added that the community must understand that she was not urged by curiosity in thus going against the established tradition of the convent, but was acting in deference to the advice of the Bishop. If, however, there were a number opposed to this, she would postpone the investigation until their view had been laid before him. Rather to my surprise not a voice was raised against the proposal, while several of the nuns spoke in favour of it, and finally the Abbess asked me to proceed with the search.

“It did not take long to cut through the stitches of the outer cover, beneath which was a second one, also of linen, somewhat yellow and discoloured, and evidently of considerable age. When this too had been removed, we found that the contents were tightly wrapped in a long strip of silk brocade, wound round and round many times. There must have been fully five or six yards of this material, and when I had taken it all off, I handed it over to the Abbess. After a careful examination by a number of the nuns, they agreed that it was of French make, and, judging by the style of the design, was not newer than the end of the seventeenth century at latest. I have a piece of it still among the vestments in the sacristy upstairs.

“The removal of the silk had reduced the bulk

of the pillow very considerably, and we were evidently nearing the heart of the mystery, for out of the wrappings had appeared a thickish, oblong package, some eighteen inches by twelve, wrapped round with parchment, the edges being carefully sewn together and sealed in several places. I tried to make out the impression on the wax, for, as you know, the seal is often an important detail in authenticating relics. Unfortunately, the wax had perished a good deal, and even where it was more or less intact the device was too indistinct to give any clue, so we could learn nothing from this source.

“I now cut open the stitches, broke the seals, and opened the parchment cover. Inside was a package wrapped in rough paper, quite yellow with age, on which was written an inscription in ink almost the colour of iron-mould. I made a copy of it later, here it is.” The old priest produced a folded sheet of foolscap from the envelope which he had brought from the relic cupboard and read as follows:

“*The reliques herein enclosede, were brought oute of England by mee Wm. Fenwicke, ch̄plaine to ye blue nuns atte Paris, after my escapeing from ye prison of Newe Gate, in the yere of Or. Lord's Incarnacion, 1647. They hadde bene gathered during manye yeres by one of those atached to his Excellencie the Spanish Ambassador's householde, the whiche, seeing his ende could not be farre off, desyred mee to*

*convey the same to a place of safety, where jewells so rare mighte be esteemed at their trewe valewe. Preciosa in cōspectu Dni. mors sanctorū ejus.*

“ ‘ WM. FENWICKE, *ch̄plaine*.

“ ‘ *Paris, 1650.*’

“ Within this cover were some five-and-twenty little packages, each folded up in a separate paper and carefully tied with silk. Every package contained relics of one of the English martyrs who had suffered at Tyburn prior to 1647; and I have not the smallest doubt that the collection was made, probably at great personal risk, by the devout Catholic layman whom William Fenwicke described as ‘one of those attached to his Excellency the Spanish Ambassador’s household.’

“ The nuns were naturally overjoyed to find that the pillow contained so remarkable a treasure; and in gratitude to me for bringing it to light they generously offered to give me a portion of each of the relics. I accepted the offer gladly, and afterwards had those four silver reliquaries, like frames, made to take them—the ones which hang on the inside of the doors of the relic cupboard upstairs. I also copied the inscriptions on the different packages, here are some of them ”—and he referred again to the foolscap sheet.

“ ‘ *A fynger of Mr. Reynolds, preste, hanged at Tyburn on jan. ye 21st, 1642.*

“ ‘ *A hankercher stayned with ye blode of bro. Henry Heath, a graye fryer, wth some of hys haire. ob. die 17a Aprilis, 1643.*

“ ‘ *Ye left thumb of D. Jhon Roberts, preste and monke of St Benet's order. at Tyburn, Dec. 1610. Ye martir's bodie being recoverd by some of my Lorde's householde, was conveyde over seas to ye convent of hys order atte Doway.*

“ ‘ *Mr. Garnet, Jesuite, accused of complicitie in ye powdre plott. 2 reliques, wth a peece of ye rope wheerwith he was hang'd, Tyburn, 1608.*

“ ‘ *Mystrys Ann Line, gentlewoman, hanged for harboring of prestes, 1601 : a clout wet wth teeres and blodde, wth some of holy haire : this given to me by her sister's sonne Wylliam Brookes.*

“ ‘ *R. P. Thomae Maxfeelde, Mart : two ribs : given mee by the lady Luisa\* before that his Excellencie the Count Gondomar did transferre the martyr's bodie to his palace in Spaine, where it now is with manie other reliques.*

“ ‘ *Mr. Almonde, preste, two fingers of ye lefte hand. Obtd fr ye same source as those of Mr Maxfeelde.'*

“ I will not weary you with the whole list,” said the old priest, “ but there is one item which I think will be of special interest to you. Besides the primary relics in the package, we found one secondary one. This was a tiny silver crucifix, less than

\* This is unquestionably the famous Donna Luisa de Carvajal, who lived in London for many years under the protection of the Spanish Ambassador, and devoted her life to alleviating the lot of those English Catholics who were imprisoned for the Faith,

three inches long, the figure on it being worn quite smooth in places, as if the owner had carried it on his person for years; indeed, there was a loop of faded silk ribbon still attached to it. The paper which contained it bore no inscription, so I could tell nothing of its history, and handed it to the Abbess, saying: 'We cannot divide this between us, so you must keep it. Unfortunately there is nothing to show whom it belonged to.' The nun took it from me, examined it carefully for a little, and then exclaimed:

" 'There seems to be something engraved on the back of the cross, Father. I will have it cleaned, and then perhaps we may be able to make out what it is.' With this she gave it over to one of the younger sisters, asking her to take it to the pantry and clean it carefully with plate powder. We had just completed our task of opening the remaining packets, when the nun came back with the little crucifix, now quite bright and shining, which she handed to the Lady Abbess.'

" 'I thought so,' she said triumphantly; 'there are some words engraved on the back. See if you can read them, Father, they are too small for my eyes to make out.'

"I took the crucifix and turned it over. The inscription was quite clear and easily legible in spite of its tiny lettering. It read *Crux P. Philippi Rivers, Mart.* There was not a doubt about it. The crucifix

must have belonged to my ancestor and namesake, the words being added after his martyrdom at Tyburn in 1621. I read the words out aloud, in amazement, and then held out the relic for the Abbess to take.

“‘No, no, Father,’ she said, drawing back. ‘We cannot divide it, as you said yourself, so clearly it is you who must keep it. The inscription has told us not only whom it once belonged to, but also whom it should belong to now.’”

The old priest put his hand to his breast, drew forth a silver chain, and kissed the little cross that hung from it.

“This is the crucifix,” he said, holding it out for me to look at. “I have worn it round my neck ever since. When I am gone it will come to you, and I will ask you too to wear it always, in memory of me and of the glorious martyr, Philip Rivers.”



## THE WATCHMAN

ONE day, while browsing through the library shelves, I chanced to come upon a *Life of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre*, the "beggar saint." The book was unknown to me, and I skimmed rapidly through the amazing story, which seemed to me an extremely repulsive one. In some vague way I felt that it did not ring true to my ideas of Christian principle, which I had always looked upon as an essentially refining influence, and I told the squire so when we met at tea-time.

"To my mind the whole thing seems revolting and impossible," I said. "If the Church taught men to model their lives on such types as this, it would be all up with her mission to elevate mankind."

"*Distinguo*," replied the old priest gently. "Of course, one must admit that a life like that of St Benedict Joseph is a very special vocation and most exceptional; but I do not see how it can be called impossible, seeing that he is but one example of a well-known type, albeit the most extreme one, nor can I admit that it is necessarily revolting. Personally, while acknowledging that it differs enormously from the way of conforming one's life to that of Christ which seems possible for myself, I can quite

see that the difference is one of detail and not of principle, and that, once the call to such a life becomes clear, the very elements in it which, humanly speaking, one would call revolting, are just what give it such extraordinary value."

I had not expected such an answer, for I fancied that the old priest's extreme delicacy of feeling would find the squalor and filth of St Benedict Joseph's life even more horrible than I did; and my surprise must have shown itself in some way, for he continued a moment later:

"Let me explain myself a little more fully, and I think you will see that my point of view has something to be said for it. The essential point of sanctity, the one thing really necessary for canonization, is simply heroic charity. Now heroic charity means, as Benedict XIV puts it, that the servant of God shall have practised those virtues which his state of life, his rank and circumstances demanded, and that in an eminent or heroic degree. Of course, the heroism must not merely be displayed by a few impulsive and extraordinary acts, but must be manifested consistently throughout life, or at any rate from the date of the saint's 'conversion,' by means of varied and frequent acts, so that it is clearly established as a definite virtue or habit of the soul.

"Now in the case of St Benedict Joseph Labre it was many years before the exact nature of his

special vocation became clear to him; you will remember that he tried several different religious orders in vain. When it did come, however, it took the form of work among the lowest stratum of the poor, the 'submerged tenth' as we should call it nowadays. I don't know if you have ever been brought into personal relations with these unfortunates, but if you have, you must have felt that the greatest obstacle to helping them is their ingrained distrust of all one's efforts. We are told in the gospel how our Lord himself could not work miracles among certain men 'because of their unbelief.' Well, it always seems to me that this deep distrust of one's motives and labours, on the part of these poor wretches, produces a very similar effect. If once a man can break down this attitude of suspicion and gain their confidence, he can do something for them, and for my part I have no doubt that the very elements which you find so revolting in the life of St Benedict Joseph are precisely those which appealed most of all to the people among whom he worked. Their circumstances were his. If they suffered in helpless, hopeless misery, so did he. The result was a power of understanding and a depth of sympathy for them on his side, and a degree of confidence and love on theirs, which could not have been reached in any other way."

"I begin to understand now," I said, "but even so

it is very difficult. Perhaps if I had worked among the poor in our slums, as you have, I should better appreciate the heroism of St Benedict Joseph's life. But if his method be the true way to success among the very poor, is it not strange that we should have no other case at all like his among the records of those who have worked in the same sphere?"

"I don't at all admit that his case has no parallel," replied the old priest. "He is certainly the most extreme instance, but there are to-day, and have been at all times, numbers of holy men and women who have gone down to the depths in their zeal for souls. It is simply because the world does not care to hear about such things that the glory of their lives is hidden." The old priest paused for a minute, looking straight before him as if lost in thought, then he turned to me again.

"I once chanced to meet a man who lived and died utterly unknown beyond the limit of a London slum. Let me tell you the story of his life, and I think you will acknowledge that St Benedict Joseph has not been without one follower, at all events.

"More than twenty years ago I undertook to act for a time as chaplain to a convent of nuns, who work in the East End of London, near the docks. They visit the parish, teach the schools attached to the church, and take in old people who are past work, but whom, for one reason or another, it is

thought best to keep out of the workhouse. The man in question was one of these. He was always known as 'Old Andrews,' and though I learned his real name I will not mention it, if you don't mind, as he wished his identity to remain a secret.

"Some of the old people were a sad trial to the good nuns, for they were always grumbling, though they were far better off in the convent than they would have been anywhere else, and my attention was drawn to Old Andrews because he was always so cheerful and contented—the only one, in fact, who seemed to appreciate the kindness and care that he received. I soon found out that he was altogether different from the rest of the old people, we became quite intimate friends, and eventually he told me his story.

"He was the younger son of a west-country squire whose family, though not a very wealthy one, was one of the oldest in that part of England. After passing through a well-known public school he went up to Oxford, where he eventually won a fellowship at one of the smaller colleges. It was the time when John Henry Newman was in the height of his power, and Andrews was caught into the Tractarian movement. Like his great leader he became a Catholic towards the end of the forties, and in consequence was deprived of his fellowship.

"He was then about thirty years old, a good scholar, though not exceptionally brilliant, and he

at once decided to take orders in the Catholic Church. It seemed clear to him, he told me, that he could serve God best as a priest, and being quite aware of his own abilities and the social advantages of his good birth, he decided to enter the secular priesthood, as the sphere in which his individuality and his talents would find most play.

"To Oscott, then, he went; but somehow he failed to 'find himself' there at all. Everyone was kind and helpful, he said, but from the first he seemed to feel that it was not the life he was meant for, and this conviction became at last too strong to be neglected. On the advice of the President of the college, he made a week's retreat, with the result that he determined to try his vocation as a Jesuit; but here too he could not settle down, and after a few months the novice-master advised him to leave. The poor man was naturally a good deal cast down at this second failure, and his position was not made easier by the fact that his funds were almost exhausted, for his relatives had dropped him completely on his reception into the Church.

"By way of keeping body and soul together and of finding occupation until his path should become clear, he decided to go in for journalism; so he came to London and took a room in a cheap lodging house near Gray's Inn. Even now the district has some very unsavoury streets in it, and in those days it was far worse. Before long the combined effects



of anxiety, disappointment, poor food, and an insanitary dwelling resulted in a complete breakdown. He became very ill, and the lodging-house keeper had him removed to St Bartholomew's Hospital, Smithfield.

"Here, no doubt, he received proper care, but from the first his chance of recovery seemed a small one. He grew rapidly worse, and one evening, about a week after his admission, he collapsed suddenly and was pronounced to be dead. His body was, in fact, removed to the mortuary of the hospital, and as the next day chanced to be Sunday not a soul came near the place for fully four-and-twenty hours. On the Monday morning, however, the mortuary attendant was astounded to find the body still warm. He drew attention to the fact, restoratives were applied, and after a long while the man came back to himself.

"His convalescence was long and slow; but, as he told me, it seemed quite short to him, so engrossed was he with his own thoughts. For somehow, when his mind began to work again after its long period of unconsciousness, he found that his whole outlook upon life had shifted. The very elements of his character seemed to have changed. His intellectual scale of values had altered. His memory, which seemed largely to have lost its hold on things academic, now dwelt persistently on events in his past life which he had

formerly looked upon as trifles, but which now seemed full of significance, and that always from a spiritual point of view.

“Pardon me if I elaborate the matter somewhat, for this strange ‘conversion’ seemed, both to him and to me, the most remarkable part of his story. You must understand, then, that before it—I mean before the time when he was given up and left for dead—he had been a typical Oxford don, scholarly and intellectual; religious certainly, but interested in religion as satisfying the claims of the understanding, rather than holding on to it as the essential basis of right conduct; viewing it, in short, as an act of mind rather than one of will, as knowledge rather than as love. Now, after his change, he found himself looking upon life much as the Curé d’Ars seems to have done. He seemed almost to have lost hold of the intellectual side, so absolutely was he humbled with regard to the share of the mind in religious life. Instead of it, the will and its activities—charity, self-abnegation, living for others, even to the degree of vicarious suffering voluntarily endured or even actively sought for—this was now his idea of what a religious life should be.

“Previously he had been full of schemes for active work: a crusade of preaching, a rapid conversion of England by means of controversial pamphlets, to say nothing of larger literary ventures, which should answer the attacks of unbelievers and

carry the war into the enemies' country. Now, such dreams seemed not merely impossible for him, but actually foolish in themselves, as being mostly wasted energy, or at any rate as requiring an expenditure of personal effort altogether beyond the results they could achieve. Instead he felt himself drawn to a life absolutely hidden in character, where his active work for souls should be as far as possible unknown; using prayers, communions, and Masses for his weapons, preaching by example instead of by word, substituting a crusade of charity for one of controversy, conquering souls by sympathy instead of argument, and this too as a layman, not as a priest.

“He told me all I have said, but in greater detail and far more convincingly than I can convey to you, and then I asked him to tell me, as well as he could, in what way this wonderful change was brought about in him. He answered that the only way in which he could explain it was that, while he lay there unconscious, he felt as if some overwhelming force took possession of his soul and forcibly changed its point of observation; so that henceforth it looked upon life from quite a novel standpoint, and had no power to shift back again to its former angle of vision. As he lay there, dead to all appearances—and you must understand that it seemed to him all the time that he had actually died—his soul seemed to escape from the body and rise above it, as if

going to God. He thus came to look upon the world as it were from without and from above; from the point of view of heaven, of the saints of God. Looking upon life from this detached and higher standpoint, he found that the relative values of things were changed, for it was no longer the external or objective appearance, but the inward and spiritual worth of things which he perceived.

“Thus, for example, he saw that the worldly prosperity of a man, or of a family, was of trifling moment compared with their internal, spiritual state. In the same way he saw that the value of each individual soul was inestimably great, and moreover that this value never depreciated—I mean that, whether there were many souls or few, it made no difference in their individual value, since the multitude of souls did not make each several one a whit less precious in God’s eyes, in the way that increased supply cheapens the objects of worldly commerce. Then, too, the difference of soul from soul in value—by which he meant in loveliness—became clear to him, and he understood that this difference was proportionate to the degree in which each soul reflected the image of him who made it, and to the effort of will which each was making to love and serve God.

“Another element in the process of spiritual enlightenment which he underwent consisted in a kind of revelation of sin. I wish I could give you

an adequate idea of the way in which he spoke of sin, its consequences, and the stupendous part it plays in the world. He saw it, he told me, as it really is; stripped of disguise, in utter nakedness, its nature manifest with every hideous feature plain to see. He realized, as he had never done before, its terrible insidiousness, how, once admitted into the mind, it spreads like some fell infection into the heart, paralyzing the will and soiling the secret places of the memory with a track like that of some hideous reptile. Then, too, its power, so subtle, yet so tremendous, was revealed to him, and the utter helplessness of a soul against it, without the help of God and his grace.

“ ‘The soul that plays with sin,’ he said to me, ‘has no more chance of escape by its own power than a man who is entangled in the mechanism of some mighty engine. The thing may be his own invention, but what of that? The power he has called into being is a thousand times mightier than he, and will it spare him merely because he is its maker? I often wonder,’ he added, ‘why preachers always liken a soul in mortal sin to a body that is dead. If that were all, its lot would be a happy one compared with what it is. To me a soul that has sinned mortally is like a man buried alive. Alive, with every faculty alert and every sense in full activity, but shut in and entombed, like some poor wretch screwed down and locked

within a vault; conscious of his awful fate and all it means, yet powerless to escape or even to move. And then, the very one whom he has wronged, the self-same Lord to whom he has been false, comes down and breaks his bonds and sets him free; washing the poor soul with his precious blood, pouring the balm of grace upon its wounds, nursing it gently back to health and strength; yet knowing all the time, perhaps, that it will fall again, nay that it will go on falling to the end, and even, possibly, will die in sin and so be lost to him eternally. My God, what love is thine, what guilt is ours !

“ You will understand that, after such an experience, with his whole outlook on life reversed, he left the hospital another man. Strange to say, an accident intervened to change his identity as well as his character. When the time came for him to leave the hospital, he was taken to the office to sign the register, a large book in which the name and address of each patient is entered on a separate line, with the dates of entry and departure. In the last column on the right he signs his name on leaving; or, if he die in hospital, the word *dead* is entered in the space.

“ The registrar’s clerk, who was in a hurry, asked him the official number he had borne in the hospital, turned to the page, and pushed the book towards him. To his amazement in the space opposite his name appeared the word *dead*, while



the space below was blank, the only blank left on the page.

“ ‘ Here you are,’ said the clerk, pointing to the blank and running his finger along the line to the name at the left-hand side. ‘ James Andrews, is it ? Just write it here.’

“ ‘ But I can’t write that,’ exclaimed my friend; meaning, of course, that he could not sign another man’s name.

“ ‘ What, can’t write your own name!’ exclaimed the clerk; ‘ all right, I’ll do it for you then.’ And the name was written and the ledger put back, before the other could find words with which to explain.

“ Then, suddenly, it dawned upon him that there was a purpose in what had happened. He, the man who had been brought there many weeks before, was officially certified as dead in the hospital records; and after all, was it not more or less true ? So far as his soul was concerned, so far as character went and everything by which his personality could have been recognized, he had died and risen again, a new man. Doubtless the entry in the register was just a slip—it was James Andrews who should have been marked as *dead*, not he. But, after all, why care about the blunder ? He meant to begin life again with a new character, a new outlook, new aims and purposes—in a word, with a new soul. Why not accept the accident as pro-

vidential, and adopt 'James Andrews' as a new name? His relatives, if they inquired, would be told that he had died in hospital. Why undeceive them? The change of name would prevent them from interfering with the new life that he had planned during the long weeks of convalescence; for he had his scheme all ready, and it was this:

"He would go into the humblest part of the great city and lose himself there. Work of some kind he would get, to keep himself alive; and, while earning his living in this humble way, he would be sure to come in touch with those whom he could help. The destitute, the outcasts of society, hiding where no organized effort ever reached them, these were the souls for whom he meant to work; it was for them, he knew, that God had sent him back to life.

"In pursuance of this plan, he left the hospital without drawing notice to the blunder in the register, and made his way eastward into the slums. Fortunately it was summer time and he had a little money, which had been in the pockets of his clothes when he was taken to St Bartholomew's. For a week or so he tramped the streets in search of work, sleeping at night in a common lodging house; but the days went by, his money was running low, and no means of earning a livelihood presented itself.

"He was almost at his last shilling when he

chanced to see a notice on the hoarding round a big unfinished building. 'NIGHT WATCHMAN WANTED,' was all it said, but the words seemed to him like a message from heaven. He had not the physical strength to work as a navvy, and, of course, he knew no sort of skilled trade; but here was the very thing for him. As a night watchman he would have long hours to himself, hours which could be given, as he desired, to prayer and contemplation. He believed himself sent to help the lowest of the low; where could he find them so easily as among the poor wretches who tramp the streets all night for want of shelter, and are glad to share the warmth of a watchman's brazier? The whole thing came to him in a flash, and he walked to the foreman's office and applied for the job.

" 'They made no difficulty about giving it to me,' he told me, 'which I took to be another proof that it was God's will. That night I entered on my job, and I stayed with the same firm of contractors as a night watchman, until I got past work and came into the convent here, three years ago.'

"From that day until he died, more than thirty years later, his mode of life never changed, but only intensified itself and deepened with the years. He took a tiny room at the top of a lodging house where he slept during the day; for, of course, his work meant a complete reversal of ordinary hours.

As a rule he used to come off work about six o'clock in the morning—the hour varied in winter and summer—and at once he made his way to the nearest church to hear Mass and receive Communion. After his thanksgiving he would go home and have something to eat, for he had fasted from midnight; so he usually got to bed by eight o'clock. He was up and about by four o'clock in the afternoon, and had an hour or two to himself before going to his work again at dusk, which might be as early as five o'clock in winter, while in summer he would often be free till eight o'clock, if the men were working overtime.

“From the first he found, as he had expected, that the long, quiet hours were a perfect opportunity for mental prayer, and he soon began to spend the whole period from midnight in contemplation. This naturally culminated in the Mass and Communion when he went off work, and I remember his saying that he wondered why communities of religious did not adopt such an arrangement. To him it seemed the nearest possible approach to the primitive plan, in which the Lord's supper came in the evening as the climax of a day spent in serving God; and he told me that, until one had tried, it was impossible to realize how the prospect of Communion to come, when the day's work was ended, coloured every minute and linked up every thought with God.

He saw quite clearly that the rule of fasting Communion made such a thing impossible for most people, as they could not work all day without food, and he counted it the chief blessing of his inverted way of life that he was compelled to act in the matter as the early Christians did.

“Up to midnight, or thereabouts, the streets were usually too noisy and the flow of human life too turbulent to make recollection possible, but the knowledge of the quiet hours to come made him fully content that it should be so. Indeed, from the first, he looked upon the opportunities of helping others, which his work supplied, as a signal proof that the whole affair was providential. I do not wish to exaggerate the work he did in this way, or make it seem as if his life was occupied wholly with the salvage of human souls. But it is only the bare truth that he gradually developed a real apostolate of his own among the wreckage of men and women, the flotsam and jetsam of humanity, which is always drifting aimlessly about the streets of London. Numbers of these poor creatures—harlots, drunkards, men and women half desperate for want of food and work, little children, orphaned or abandoned, unfortunates of every conceivable type—would come his way, and stop to warm their famished bodies at his glowing brazier. He had a word of sympathy for everyone, and in most cases that

alone was enough to break the ice of their reserve, for none of them suspected what he really was.

“In this way his influence came to be very great. He got to know the clergy of the various slum parishes and, by working in conjunction with them, became the means of bringing many a poor wandering soul back to the practice of religion, rescuing others from lives of crime and infamy, and saving some from self-destruction. I doubt if any of the organized agencies for slum work ever even heard of Old Andrews, but I honestly believe that his years of unknown self-devotion did more real good and saved more souls than any of their costly, much advertised schemes.

“In this way, dividing his time between active work for others and long hours of private prayer in the watches of the night, his soul developed wonderfully in wisdom, love, and sympathy, and on the basis of its natural powers God’s grace built up a structure of unusual beauty. It was not merely that all natural repugnance to his life of poverty passed away from him; that the squalor, want, and aimless misery of his surroundings ceased to sadden him; but rather that he came to look upon such things themselves as an essential element of true renunciation, realizing that only by them and through them can certain souls achieve that perfect liberty of spirit which is the hall-mark of the sons of God.



“ ‘ You must not think, Father,’ he said to me one day, ‘ that I do not realize such things are evils in themselves, or that I look on them as being necessary evils; it is not that. On the contrary, I count them among the chief hindrances to the triumph of good and the re-establishment of all things in Christ. My point is this, that all these evil things are the creation of man himself; that they are simply the material results of countless human wills which are not conformed in all things to the will of God. By things such as these the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, they are the heritage we receive from the past. A *damnosa hereditas* if ever there was one, but one which we cannot escape or get rid of, save by accepting it as part of our lot in life, and striving, each one of us individually, to remedy the evil by our own personal service. Many years ago I once read the Rule of St Benedict, and I have never forgotten a sentence in it where the Saint bids his disciples to “return by the labour of obedience to Him from whom you have departed by the sloth of disobedience.” It seems to me that those words sum up the whole matter for us. I mean that social progress, like the advance of the individual soul in its personal religion, is a matter of working our way back to God along the paths of duty; for after all, to us Christians, duty is simply the will of God.’ ”

“Certainly in his own case this life-long ‘working back’ did bring his soul into very close relationship with God. As he advanced in prayer he often found that he would know beforehand what people were about to come his way. Often, too, by some mysterious foreknowledge which he could not explain, he found that their difficulties and needs were all clear to him before they began to tell him about themselves. Sometimes he would find words put into his mouth to speak to them, and while these were usually quite different from what he would have said of himself, they seemed to give help, and to revive hope in a way which mere human wisdom could not do.

“In this hidden, unknown way he lived and worked for thirty years or so, and God alone knows how many poor souls were saved through his gentle, selfless apostolate. Then, when he was more than sixty years old, he was seriously injured in a street accident, while trying to save a little child from being run over. For some time his life hung in the balance, and though he recovered in the end, it was clear that he could not resume his old way of life, with its long hours of exposure in all weathers. Accordingly, the nuns of the convent which I mentioned arranged to take him in, and there he remained until his death, a year or two after I had ceased to act as chaplain there.

“His one regret in this last period of his life

was that he had no longer any opportunity of doing active work for God.

“‘I must try and make up for it by praying better,’ he said with touching humility; adding, reflectively, ‘I suppose, after all, prayer is the best way of working for others, because in active work we make so many blunders, while in prayer we leave everything to God’s grace, and he never makes a mistake.’

“When our acquaintance had developed into intimacy, he told me that there was one soul in particular for whom he was praying. This was his own nephew, son of his elder brother, and now the head of the family.

“‘Since the day that I left hospital, stamped with another man’s name,’ he said, ‘I have never held any communication with my kith and kin, and if they ever inquired about me they must have been told that I had died in St Bartholomew’s. But one day, some few years ago, I saw the notice of my brother’s death in the paper, and it mentioned that he was succeeded by his only son, an officer in the Army. Ever since then I have been praying for that young man and especially for his conversion to the Faith, and now that I have no active work to do, I make this the chief intention in all my prayers, and offer up my Communion for him once every week.’

“I remembered this a year or two later, when

I saw a notice in the *Tablet* that the young squire had been received into the Church, and I wrote to Old Andrews to congratulate him. A week afterwards the letter came back to me, with a note from the Reverend Mother. She told me that the old man had died several days before my letter had reached the convent, and on comparing the dates I found that his death and his nephew's reception had occurred on the same day. Of course, you can say that this was merely a coincidence, but for my part I like to think it was something more."

The old priest ceased speaking and sat silent for a minute or so, looking out with steady gaze into the west, where the last glow of the sunset was slowly fading; then he turned to me with a smile.

"That is the bare outline of my friend's story," he said. "I could fill in many other details, but I hardly think you need them. He was the nearest parallel I have ever met to the type of St Benedict Joseph Labre, and if you yourself had known him as I did, I cannot believe you would have called his life 'revolting and impossible.'"

## THE FOOTSTEP OF THE AVENTINE

LIKE many another English Catholic gentleman, the squire is a conscientious reader of the *Tablet*, going through it week by week from the first page to the last, on the day that the paper arrives. One evening after dinner he was engaged in his weekly task, and Father Bertrand and myself were playing a quiet game of chess, when all at once the silence was broken by a sudden exclamation.

"Oh dear," he cried, "another old friend gone!" adding as he turned towards us, "It is Count Rudolf von Arenberg, Grand Master of the Knights of Malta; the 'Roman Letter' says he was found dead in his bed, on Monday of last week."

"Count Rudolf von Arenberg," repeated Father Bertrand thoughtfully, "I don't seem to recollect his name at all. Have you ever mentioned him to me, Philip? I thought I knew all your old friends, at any rate by name."

"Really, I can't say," replied the squire, "but it is possible I may not have done so. I knew him fairly intimately a good many years ago, and was once his guest for a considerable time, but for some time past I have heard nothing of him. Still, I

remember him very well, for a curious incident occurred while I was staying with him, which made the visit stand out vividly in my memory."

"Would it be too much to ask what the incident was, sir?" I asked; for I had learned by now that such a phrase often indicated one of the old priest's experiences.

"I will tell you the story with pleasure," he replied, "but won't you finish your game first?"

"It is finished," said Father Bertrand with a smile. "My young friend is only one move off being checkmated—that's why he wants the story;" and he swept the pieces back into the box as I acknowledged my defeat. Then we moved up to the fire where the squire was sitting, and he began.

"For five or six years after my ordination I never went back to Rome, but after that I usually spent a month or two there every spring for quite a number of years. As a rule, I used to stay at the Austrian College, the Rector of which was a great friend of mine, as we had been fellow students at the *Accademia* years before. It was he who introduced me to Count Rudolf von Arenberg, who was a relation of his and had become Grand Master of the Knights of Malta several years before I first met him. You must remember their house on the Aventine, Bertrand, almost next door to your own Dominican church of Santa Sabina. It is the place where people go to see the famous view of St Peter's.



You look through a little hole in the garden door, and there is the great dome right before you, framed by the two walls of clipped box trees that line the sides of the path.

“Nowadays, of course, the Knights of Malta are very few in number and almost all of them are Austrians, for their only remaining houses are in Austria. The Grand Master, however, has to be in Rome for most of the year, so Count Rudolf used to live up on the Aventine almost alone, and, as we soon became intimate, he begged me to make use of the large garden they have there whenever I cared to do so.

“One afternoon when I was there—I fancy it must have been the second or third year after we had first met—he asked me if I would come and stay with him on the Aventine for some weeks and act as his chaplain. It appeared that the official chaplain had been called home to Austria on business and was not likely to return for a month or more.

“‘Your only duty,’ he explained, ‘will be to say Mass in the chapel every day. You will have the chaplain’s suite of rooms all to yourself, and as for meals, you can have them served in your own apartment or with myself, as you prefer. And I assure you,’ he added, ‘it will be not only a great convenience to me, but a joy as well if you can accommodate yourself to my proposal, and I am

sure you will not regret your kindness in coming to my assistance.'

"That year, as it happened, I was not staying at the Austrian College, but in a hotel, which was not very pleasant; so I gladly availed myself of the offer he had made so gracefully, and next afternoon took possession of the chaplain's rooms. Count Rudolf was out when I arrived, but Baldassare, the old, white-haired steward, who had been in the employ of the Knights for nearly forty years, received me with true Italian courtesy.

"The Roman house of the Knights stands on a corner of the Aventine hill, one side of which falls away abruptly towards the Tiber, the steep slope being cut back into terraces and laid out as a formal garden. Behind the house, the face of the hill turns almost at right angles with the terraced garden, and in those days the whole of the enclosure was laid out as a vineyard. This part is now the site of the huge international college of San Anselmo, which Leo XIII built a few years ago for students of the Benedictine Order, but at the time of which I am speaking it was still unbuilt on. At the far end, fully three hundred yards from the house, stands a great bastion, part of the fortification begun by Pope Paul IV but never completed, which was meant to command the Porta San Paolo, only a gunshot off.

"It was about an hour before sunset when I

arrived, and after unpacking my belongings and settling into my new abode, I took my breviary and said my office in the vineyard, walking up and down the path that ran along the face of the hill and ended at the great bastion. As I finished, the sun was setting, so I turned back to the house and found my host walking on the upper terrace.

“He greeted me very kindly; we arranged about the hour for Mass and settled that I would take my meals with him and not alone, an arrangement which he said he would much prefer; then a bell rang in the little campanile and we adjourned to get ready for dinner. Not unnaturally, the conversation during the meal turned upon the history of the Knights of Malta and their establishment on the Aventine. The Grand Master was a mine of knowledge on the subject, and when the meal was over he took me upstairs to the Archivium, and showed me the splendid collection of documents relating to the history of the Order, kindly giving me permission to examine them as much as I wished during my stay on the Aventine.

“It was nearly midnight when I left my host and retired to my bedroom. Here I undressed and, after putting out the light, kneeled for a while in prayer by the open window. This window faced towards the vineyard, and as I rose from my knees I heard the sound of footsteps, pacing quietly along the path leading to the bastion. It

was too dark to see anything, but I felt a momentary surprise, as the Romans always insist that the night air is unhealthy. Almost at once, however, it occurred to me that Count Rudolf was an Austrian and slightly contemptuous of Italian ideas, so I felt no doubt that it was he himself, taking a little stroll before going to bed.

“Next morning I spent three or four hours in the Archivium, and after lunch went for a long walk in the Campagna. The result was that I felt very tired after dinner, so I excused myself to the Grand Master, said my office, and was in bed about ten o'clock. That spring the weather was exceptionally warm, and though I went to sleep very quickly, I woke up after a time feeling hot and restless. I could not get to sleep again, so after a while I got out of bed and walked to the window to get some fresh air. To my surprise, I heard the same faint footfall which I had heard the night before, pacing along the path that led to the bastion. Whoever it was, he was nearing the house, for as I listened the sound grew steadily clearer and eventually the steps came right up to my window; but there was no moon and I could distinguish nothing.

“‘Evidently the Grand Master is a bad sleeper,’ I said to myself; ‘I must have been in bed a couple of hours at least, and here he is still walking in the vineyard.’ I felt curious to know the time,

but did not want him to think that I was watching, so I waited until the sound was far away again before striking a light. When I judged that he was almost at the farthest distance from the house, I lit a match and looked at my watch. It was twenty minutes to three! You can imagine my surprise; but, after all, it was no business of mine, so I got into bed again and was soon asleep.

“Next morning, when we met at breakfast, I looked curiously at Count Rudolf. He seemed perfectly fresh, and I could hardly believe he had been in bed for less than four hours. I did not like to ask him point blank why he had stayed up half the night, so I said casually:

“‘I hope you did not sit up late again last night, searching in the Archivium on my account.’

“‘Not at all,’ said he, to my amazement. ‘I was tired last night, though I had not your excuse, since I had not walked three leagues in the Campagna, but I went to bed soon after you did, and must have slept fully eight hours without waking.’

“It was on the tip of my tongue to tell him that I had heard someone in the vineyard on both the previous nights, but it struck me that it would be wiser to speak first to Baldassare. You have both lived in Italy, so you know the amazing way Italians have of being up at all hours of the night and sleeping during the day to make up for it. Possibly, I thought, it may have been Baldassare

himself, or some watchman looking after the vineyard. Yes, I would speak to the steward before saying anything to the Grand Master.

“That morning Count Rudolf had to go into Rome on business, which left me to my own devices, and I was soon in conversation with the old steward. I told him how I had heard footsteps but had failed to distinguish anyone in the darkness, and asked if he knew who could be patrolling the vineyard at night. The old man listened intently to what I had to say, and waited without a word until I had finished.

“‘Don Filippo,’ he said at length, ‘you are a priest and you understand many things. I can tell you nothing about the footsteps except this, that when I first came here, forty years ago, the *capellano*, Don Angelo, warned me that such footsteps were often heard, and told me I need have no fear if I chanced to hear them also. I asked him what it was, but he would tell me no more; though I always think he could have told me, had he wished to.’

“‘And have you ever heard the footsteps yourself?’ I asked him.

“‘I used to do so sometimes,’ he answered, ‘but for many years now I have slept in the little room above the porter’s lodge, and the window there looks out eastward, so I have heard nothing.’

“‘And has nothing ever been seen?’ I asked him.



“ ‘ Nothing, Signor, so far as I know; but I think Don Angelo may have seen something, for how else would he know who it is that walks ?’

“ ‘ Did you ever go into the vineyard at night to watch ?’ I asked.

“ ‘ *Madre di Dio*, I should think not,’ said the old man, and he crossed himself at the suggestion. ‘ The Aventine has not a good reputation, Don Filippo. You know what kind of things used to take place here of old. No one wanders about the Aventine at midnight if he can help it.’

“ It was clear that I should get nothing more out of Baldassare, so I thanked him and went back to my sitting-room. Here there were a number of portraits depicting past members of the Order, and I noticed for the first time that one of them bore the inscription *Don Angelo de Angelis, Capellano*, 1825–1866. I felt sure that this must be the Don Angelo of whom Baldassare had spoken, and I determined to ask Count Rudolf about him. That evening, therefore, at dinner, I contrived to turn the conversation on to the subject of the portraits in the house, and so to those in the chaplain’s rooms, and the Grand Master told me about a number of them.

“ ‘ But how stupid of me !’ he broke out suddenly, ‘ I wonder I did not think of it sooner. Do you know that you have a compatriot among the chaplains whose pictures hang in your sitting-room ?’

“ ‘ Indeed,’ I answered in surprise, ‘ and who is that ?’

“ ‘ To tell the truth,’ he replied, ‘ I cannot for the life of me remember his surname, but he was Don Giovanni something. His portrait hangs next to that of old Don Angelo, who was the last chaplain here before my friend for whom you are so kindly supplying. Don Angelo was our chaplain for fully forty years, and he insisted on having his portrait hung next to that of the English chaplain, Don Giovanni. Indeed, I remember now that he had got together some materials for writing a life of him.’

“ ‘ But how interesting !’ I exclaimed. ‘ I suppose Don Angelo knew him personally. Was he the chaplain immediately before Don Angelo himself ?’

“ ‘ Oh dear no,’ replied Count Rudolf, ‘ he died more than two hundred years ago, for he was chaplain in the time of Urban VIII. I really don’t know why Don Angelo was so interested in him; but his collections for the biography must be in the Archivium upstairs—you shall go through them yourself, if you care to.’

“ Of course I accepted the offer eagerly, and after dinner we went upstairs to find the papers. To my disappointment, the Grand Master was quite uncertain where they were kept, and in spite of a long search we failed to find them.

“ ‘ I have seen the *dossier* myself, so it must be here,’ he said, ‘ but it is some years ago, and I really do not remember where they are.’ ”

“ For a couple of hours we searched through cupboard after cupboard and my hopes were sinking very low, when all at once Count Rudolf gave a sharp exclamation.

“ ‘ Why now, how foolish of me !’ he exclaimed. ‘ I don’t believe they are in this room at all. I feel almost sure that they are in your own apartment, in that little cupboard between the bookcases.’ ”

“ I did not remember any such cupboard, and said so, but the Grand Master was quite positive.

“ ‘ Oh yes,’ he said, ‘ there is such a cupboard, but you might easily overlook it. It is simply a narrow upright space in the angle of the wall where the two bookcases meet. The door looks like a solid pilaster, set across the angle. Let us go down and look there, at any rate.’ ”

“ To my sitting-room we went, then, and the theory proved correct. There was a tall narrow cupboard in the angle of the wall, and of course I had never suspected that the carved wooden pilaster was really a door. Count Rudolf opened it with the key that fitted all the cases in the Archivium, and to my delight it contained a package of papers, endorsed *Vita di Don Giovanni Fenton, il solo capellano Inglese dei Cavalieri di San Giovanni sul’*

*Aventino*.\* It was getting late now, so the Grand Master begged me to excuse him and left me, saying:

“‘Do not tire yourself by sitting up half the night reading Don Angelo’s collection of notes. You can study the papers at leisure in the morning.’

“When he had gone I arranged the shade of my lamp so that the light fell on the two portraits of Don Giovanni and Don Angelo, and then seated myself before them in one of the big old-fashioned chairs. I must have stayed there, looking dreamily at the two portraits, for a considerable time, when all at once an idea came into my mind. It struck me that I had never heard of Don Angelo until that morning, and that now I had learned two curious facts about him. The first one Baldassare had told me, viz., how interested he had been in the mysterious footsteps, and how apparently he, and he alone, knew who it was that walked. The second point Count Rudolf had supplied; I mean his deep and unexplained interest in the long-dead Don Giovanni, the only Englishman who had ever been chaplain at the Aventine house before myself, and how he had collected materials to write his life.

“Were these two interests connected? I asked myself; and if so, was it the Englishman, Don John

\* Life of Don John Fenton, the only English chaplain of the Knights of St John upon the Aventine hill.

Fenton, whose footstep was heard so often in the vineyard though no one had ever seen him ?

“ It was midnight now, and, moved by a sudden impulse, I walked through into the bedroom, opened the window wide, and listened. Sure enough, far away down the path to the bastion, I heard the faint sound of footsteps pacing slowly towards the house. I waited in silence as the sound grew closer, and finally seemed to be just beneath the window. Then, silently, I leaned well out of the casement and said quietly in English :

“ ‘ If you are Don John, the former English chaplain, tell me what it is you wish ; I, too, am English and a priest.’ ”

“ The footsteps, till then quite regular, now ceased abruptly and there was perfect silence for a minute or so. Then I repeated my words and paused again for an answer. This time, from beneath the window, there came the faintest sound—I hardly know how to describe it, but it was like a stifled gasp, the kind of sound a man will sometimes make just before he dies, when he is trying to speak and cannot. After a pause I repeated what I had said a third time, very slowly and distinctly, and once more waited breathlessly for an answer.

“ This time there was no doubt about the reply. Very faint it was, the merest whisper in fact, like someone speaking along the wall of a long gallery, but the words were unmistakable.

“ ‘Burn, burn, burn,’ it said; and then there was silence again.

“ ‘Burn what ?’ I asked quickly; but no answer came.

“ ‘What is it you wish me to burn ?’ I said. Still there was silence.

“ ‘Can you not tell me what it is I am to burn ?’ I asked a third time, and waited. The faintest possible murmur—like a smothered sigh—sounded for a moment only, and then absolute silence, not a footfall even. I remained at the window for quite another half-hour but heard nothing more; so, with a feeling of deep disappointment, I went to bed and eventually to sleep.

“ Next morning, after breakfast, I set to work on the packet of papers which we had found the night before. I had decided that I would read straight through them first of all, and afterwards copy such as proved to be of interest. Most of the papers were written in the same hand as that on the outside of the packet, which, I had no doubt, was Don Angelo’s, and they were evidently copies of documents in the archives and extracts from various sources. Besides these, however, there was a small package carefully fastened up, with a piece of paper folded round the whole and sealed in several places.

“ On close examination I found that the wax looked recent and held strongly, while the paper of



the wrapper was clearly ancient. I did not want to tear it, in case there might be writing on the inside, so I brought a candle to the marble-topped table by the window at which I was working, lit it, and held the blade of my knife in the flame until it was quite hot. I then passed it under the flap, cut through the seals without injuring the paper, and the wrapper was open.

“Sure enough, the inside of the sheet was written upon, the words being in Latin and written in the hand which I had decided was that of Don Angelo, though the paper of the cover was evidently far older. I cannot tell you the exact words after all these years, but the gist of them was that the writer had found the enclosed papers among some others in the archives, had removed them and sealed them up, since they appeared to be private and of a confidential nature.

“I felt some doubt whether I ought to go through the contents of the package without first asking the Grand Master’s permission, but a glance at the uppermost paper dispelled my scruples, for I saw that it began, ‘Jhon, my deare sonne,’ and was, in fact, a letter written to the long-dead chaplain by his own mother. There were ten or a dozen such letters, all beginning the same way, and I quickly read them through, for they were quite short. I gathered that they had been written early in the seventeenth century, during the penal times, and

that Don John was then in England. I guessed, too, that he was even then a priest, though there was nothing to reveal the fact except a reference to 'summe of youre customers here,' which reminded me that I had seen a similar phrase used to describe Catholics in other documents of the persecution times, when it was important not to reveal to outsiders the religion of those referred to.

"After the letters, and apparently of about the same date, came a little notebook, formed by sewing together some half-dozen small sheets of paper. This contained, first, a list of addresses, some twenty or so in number, and I recognized several of them as the names of houses in the northern counties of England, which had belonged to well-known Catholic families, such as Gilling, Sizergh, and Hutton Hall. After most of the names were a few notes, such as a pedlar might have made; '4 yardes Bawdekinne' was one, I recollect, and another read '10 ditto for Ladye P. (blakke).' I felt pretty sure from this that Don John had carried on his ministrations in the disguise of a pedlar, and that the addresses were those of houses where he was sure of a safe refuge.

"The entries about silks and 'bawdekinne' were a difficulty, however, since some of them represented quite large amounts of material, and I could hardly suppose that the trade in stuffs was anything more than a blind. At the end of all I

found a note in different ink, which suggested an explanation to me. It ran, 'Alle the sayd obligations have nowe bene satisfyed,' from which I concluded that the entries of '10 yardes,' etc., were really notes of Masses he had undertaken; the '10 ditto for Ladye P.' being marked 'blakke' because Lady P. was dead, and the ten Masses were to be Requiems for her soul. This curious list and the letters I decided to copy, but before doing so I set to work to decipher the one paper still remaining out of the sealed packet.

"This document was in Latin, very difficult to read and full of abbreviations, the persons referred to being indicated by numbers instead of by their names. It took me well over an hour to make out the whole, but the time was well spent, for the document was evidently the most important of them all. It proved, in fact, to be nothing less than a long, written confession, made apparently by a priest, who had abjured the Catholic Faith through fear, and had accepted a benefice in the Established Church. It appeared that his anxiety for reconciliation was known, or at least suspected, by the authorities, who were watching him very closely in the hope of catching any priests with whom he might hold communication in his efforts to escape from the terrible predicament in which he found himself. The paper was not signed, and I gathered that it had been delivered to Don John by some third party,

as it ended with an appeal to the reader to find some means of helping the poor wretch who had written it. I had just reached the end of this terrible narration, and was still lost in wonder and pity at the tragedy it contained, when a knock came at the door and Baldassare entered.

“ ‘The Grand Master sends his compliments, Signor,’ he said, ‘and will be grateful if you can come to him for a minute. There are some legal papers which he has to sign, and he begs you will be so kind as to witness the signature of them.’

“Of course I said I would come at once, and rising, followed the old steward out of the room. I did not expect to be away for more than a minute or two, so I left the papers and everything just as they were on the table by the window where I had been working. As it happened, I stayed with Count Rudolf quite a quarter of an hour; for, after the documents were witnessed, he asked what I had found in Don Angelo’s *dossier*, and my description of the papers interested him greatly.

“ ‘It is really a wonderful find,’ he said when I had finished, ‘and I congratulate you on it most heartily. After luncheon you must show me the originals. I will not keep you now, for these papers must go off this morning, but later on I shall love to see your treasure.’

“Accordingly I left him to finish his business and went back to my own apartment. As I opened

the door, I noticed a strong smell of burning paper, and a glance at the table revealed the cause. The candle I had so foolishly left alight by the window must have been softened by the heat of the sun's rays and had fallen over on to the marble-topped table, where it had set fire to the pile of papers I had left there. I ran across the room and saw with dismay that the whole collection was now no more than a heap of blackened ashes, mixed with a shapeless mass of dirty, congealed wax. My vexation was intense, the knowledge that the accident was due solely to my own carelessness did not lessen it, and on the impulse of the moment I cried out aloud.

" ' Ah! Don Giovanni, you have got your wish. The papers *are* burned, although I never meant to burn them.'

" To my amazement, from below the window there came the faintest possible whisper:

" '*Deo gratias.*'

" Instantly I thrust my head out of the casement and looked down. Of course there was no one there. That night, too, I sat up till well past midnight, listening for the sound of footsteps. But I heard nothing, nor did they ever come again through all the weeks I spent upon the Aventine."

## THE SCAPEGOAT

THE postal arrangements at Stanton Rivers are still somewhat primitive, the nearest post town being about six miles away. Thence, every morning except Sunday, on which there is no delivery, His Majesty's mails set out punctually at 6 a.m. in a small dog-cart. The postman drives round a circuitous route, calling at quite half a dozen villages before he reaches Stanton Rivers, where he usually arrives about nine o'clock, so that the "Hall bag" is brought in during the course of breakfast.

The said bag is a large leather satchel with brass fittings and a lock, of which the squire and the postmaster possess keys; and on the lock-plate is engraved the name *F. RIVERS-PATER, ESQ.*, 1831, in witness of the fact that it was made for the squire's father in the year before his marriage.

I think the circumstance that the bag is older than the squire himself partly accounts for the high respect shown towards it by Avison, the butler. He always brings it in himself on a large silver tray and deposits it solemnly on a side table; after which he announces its arrival to the squire with a never-varying formula, 'The bag, sir.'



Equally changeless is the squire's answer: "Thank you, Avison; would you mind opening it?" a request which, I am sure, the old servant regards as a piece of ritual whose omission would indicate a sad tendency to modernism on the part of his master.

This morning, however, there was an addition to the concluding formula "Your letters, sir," to the squire, "and yours, sir," to myself, which usually ends the little ceremony; for Avison presented a strip of green paper to his master, saying,

"A receipt for the registered letter in the long envelope, sir; shall I sign it for you?"

"Please do so, Avison," answered the old priest; and the butler retired bearing off some letters for the servants with the empty bag, in state, upon the silver tray.

"Now what in the world can this be?" said the squire, a moment later, as he surveyed the long registered envelope beside his plate. "Look, Roger, it has an American stamp on it and some name or other in the corner," and the old man produced his spectacles, wiped them, and put them on.

"If undelivered, return to Price and Van Hartsinck, 42, West 17th Street, Philadelphia, Penn.," he read slowly, and then stopped and looked at me in mock alarm.

"Price and Van Hartsinck—what a name for a firm! They must be lawyers, I'm convinced of

it. Take my word for it, Roger, some American claimant is going to turn up and lay claim to Stanton Rivers. We shall have to flit, my boy, you and I. You'll go back to your journalism, and I shall end my days in the workhouse."

"Oh, come, sir," said I, laughing, "it may not be that at all. On the contrary, I strongly suspect that some forgotten Rivers or Pater has died a millionaire, and left his riches to restore the family fortunes."

"Well, I shan't open it till after breakfast, at any rate," he declared, with an air of determination. "I'm not going to have my digestion interfered with to please Messrs. Price and Van Hartsinck;" and he turned the offending envelope face downwards, as if to make it feel it was in disgrace.

The old squire was a most methodical man, and after breakfast always retired to the 'writing-room,' as he preferred to call his private study, where he cleared off the business of the day before he reappeared; consequently I was usually left to myself for most of the morning. On this occasion I took a longish walk after breakfast and, on my return, went to the library. To my surprise, I found the old priest there and evidently waiting for me.

"Come in, my dear boy," he cried, as I entered, "I want to tell you something"—and I saw that he held the long registered envelope in his hand.

"I know, it's the millionaire theory come true," I said lightly, pointing to the envelope.

"No, no," he answered with a smile, but in rather a sad tone; "we were both of us quite wrong. It is more like the last act of a tragedy; or rather it is the last chapter of a story which, so far as I am concerned, was left unfinished thirty years ago. If you are not busy I should like to tell it you. This unexpected *dénouement* makes me want to put the whole sad business into words."

I took a chair beside the old man, who sat in silence for fully a minute, lost in the memories which the letter had revived. Then he began to speak very quietly, more as if he were talking to himself than to me, and this is the story as he told it. Some details seem a little misty, probably because he forgot that, to one who heard it for the first time, many things would be less clear than they were to himself, who had taken so intimate a part in the actual events.

"It was somewhere in the seventies, about '77 I fancy, and I was in Paris when I first heard of the affair. My agent wrote to me to say that there had been a tragedy at Mason's cottage. The place, a very lonely one, hidden away in a little valley, had somehow caught fire in the night, and in the morning old Mrs. Mason had been found burned to death; while her son, Will Mason, of whom at first no trace was to be seen, had been dis-

covered some hours later, with his skull fractured and one arm broken, lying at the foot of a quarry two hundred yards away from the cottage. He was taken into hospital, where a trepanning operation had been performed which they hoped would save his life, but he was still unconscious when the agent wrote. They thought he must have fallen over the edge of the quarry in running to get help when the cottage first took fire.

“That was all his first letter told me, but a second one came next day, saying that there were some suspicious circumstances about the case, and that the inquest would be held on the morrow. I telegraphed to him to say I was returning at once, and travelled back that night, reaching Stanton Rivers about noon the following day. Of course, the inquest had been held even before I received the agent’s second letter, and when I got home I found him here waiting to tell me about it.

“It appeared that the medical examination of Mrs. Mason’s body had revealed the fact that her death was caused, not by the fire, but by a bullet from a pistol. There were indications, too, that the woman had been dead some time, probably an hour or two, before the fire reached her body. Moreover, the bullet was found to fit a pistol which the Masons used to keep fastened up over the fireplace in the living-room of their cottage, and which

had belonged to Mrs. Mason's first husband, one James Bull, formerly a gamekeeper on the estate here. Everything pointed to murder and arson, and the inquest had therefore been adjourned in the hope of Will Mason's recovery. That was all the agent could tell me, but I instructed him to call at the hospital, when he got back, and tell them that I was coming in to see Mason the next morning.

"Next day I drove in to the little market town and called at the hospital. First of all I interviewed the Matron, and learned that Mason had shown signs of a return to consciousness. He had become restless and delirious, and was raving a good deal. On hearing this I demanded to be allowed to see him. At first the Matron refused point blank, but I argued that, as Mason's employer, I was the person to whom it fell to look after him, as he had no relations living except his half-brother, Jim Bull, who was in the United States, and whose address was quite unknown to me. After some little discussion the Matron gave way and took me to the room where he was lying, first cautioning me to make no noise and to say nothing to the patient, no matter what his ravings might be. At first sight the man might have been dead, but for his breathing, so still did he lie. Then, suddenly, his eyes opened and he hissed out,

" 'Curse 'ee !'

"I gave a start, for his eyes were fixed full upon me as I stood at the foot of the bed, but a moment's reflection told me that he was delirious and quite unconscious of my presence.

"'Curse 'ee!' he cried again, a moment later, 'tis all thy doin'.' Then, after a pause, came a whisper I could scarcely hear, 'Poor old mother . . . never meant to hurt 'ee . . . my God . . . ' and the words ran off into unintelligible mutterings. Then the Matron led me out of the room, for I had promised only to stay a minute.

"'You see how it is, sir,' she said to me, 'we don't want people to know the kind of thing he keeps on saying.'

"'You have not told the police?' I asked her,

"'No, sir,' said she; 'but you know the coroner is one of our doctors, and he has heard Mason talking like this.'

"'That comes to the same thing, practically,' said I; and, after instructing her to do everything that could be done for the poor fellow and send me the bill, I left the hospital and drove home.

"Next day Mason recovered consciousness, and the first thing he did was to make a confession of his guilt, and ask that it should be communicated to the police. After that, of course, the result of the inquest was a foregone conclusion, and as soon as he was well enough to move, Mason was arrested.

"I saw him in prison during the interval before



the Assizes and tried to get at the circumstances of his mother's death, but he kept absolutely silent on the subject. All he would say was, 'I did it,' or ' 'Twas I,' but he would give no suggestion of his motive. Remembering what I had heard him say in delirium, I felt almost sure there was something behind which would explain the terrible act, and make it appear somewhat less dreadful than the cold-blooded murder it seemed to be; but when I suggested this, it only increased his reticence, and he simply ceased speaking altogether.

"My solicitor fared no better, for when I sent him to the prison to see Mason about his defence all the man would say was, 'Tell t'squire I'm thankfu' to him, verra thankfu', but I did it, so I'll just plead Guilty;' and in the end he was found guilty on his own confession, and condemned to death.

"The case aroused little interest, even in the neighbourhood, for the Masons had been a silent retiring couple, and no one knew them really intimately. The mother and son had got on well enough together of recent years, but I learned that, before Jim Bull had gone to America some three years earlier, there had been constant quarrels between the two brothers. In these disputes the mother had always sided with her elder son, and many thought that this had embittered Will Mason until, by brooding over the point, it had become a

kind of obsession. This explanation certainly seemed at once the most reasonable and most charitable one, and I tried to think that the poor fellow had been scarcely responsible for his terrible act.

“During the three weeks or so that intervened between the sentence and the date fixed for his execution I said Mass for him many times, for the whole affair weighed heavily on me, and I felt that this was the way in which I could help him best. Then, two days before the execution, I received a letter from the Governor of the gaol.

“He wrote that the prison chaplain could make nothing of Mason, who simply ignored all his attempts at spiritual consolation, and refused to answer his questions. I ought to have told you that, although the mother had been a Catholic of a very nominal kind, the father had insisted that their son should be brought up as a Protestant, and Mason himself had never shown any particular interest in religion. Consequently it came as a surprise when the Governor’s letter went on to say that Mason had asked to see him that day, and said that he would like to be attended by a Catholic priest, and if possible by myself.

“I did not exactly welcome the task, but it seemed a clear duty to go, so I drove in to the town the same morning, and, with the willing consent of the chaplain, arranged to attend Mason for the few hours

of life which remained to him. I expected that he would wish to be reconciled to the Church and receive absolution; but, on the contrary, he told me quite simply that he had no wish to become a Catholic. Eventually I gathered that he really wanted to be left quite alone during his last hours on earth, but, finding this was forbidden by the prison regulations, had sent for me; for, as he said, 'Ye see, squire, ye've allus been a good friend to t'ould mother and I; and I canna 'bide yon parson chap 'at comes a-worryin'.'

"It was a strange position, and perhaps rather a false one, but I felt it my duty to stay with him, and gradually he thawed a good deal and talked to me more freely. I determined not to repeat my former blunder, so made no attempt to probe into the motive of the murder, and Mason himself made no reference to it. Instead, his talk was all about the things of the soul, and I found that beneath his reticence, was a deep personal devotion to our blessed Lord.

"He was quite untaught with regard to religion, but he had read his Bible, and from it had acquired a wonderfully vivid idea of Christ as a personal Redeemer. During the long silent days in prison he had prayed constantly and, to my amazement, I found that he had reached a high state of mystical experience. His sense of the presence of God scarcely ever left him, and from time to time he

would ask me questions which showed that something very wonderful was happening in his soul.

“Gradually I began to realize that, far from needing my help, he was being directly prepared for death by the hand of God himself; and, with a feeling of deep reverence, I thanked our blessed Lord for permitting me to behold so wonderful an example of his love for men. This conviction only came to me gradually, you will understand, and I did not arrive at it on the first day I spent with him. But, on the second day, the one immediately preceding his execution, the truth of the affair became too plain to admit of further doubt.

“On that day he was more silent, speaking only at long intervals and then more as if he were thinking aloud than actually addressing me in person. I noticed, too, that his words were constantly interwoven with passages from those wonderful chapters of St John’s Gospel which contain the discourse of our Lord at the last supper. He seemed, in fact, to know the whole discourse by heart, as well as those chapters of the first Epistle of St John, which almost form a paraphrase of it, and around these two his ideas seemed to revolve continually.

“When it was almost dark, a warder came to conduct me out of the cell, but, at Mason’s request,

I sent a message to the Governor asking if I might be allowed to stay with him all night. Rather to my surprise, the petition was granted, and soon afterwards the warder brought some supper for us both. By this time the sense of Christ's presence in the place was simply overpowering, and during the meal I felt much as if we two were at Emmaus with the risen Lord.

"After supper Mason sat in silence for fully an hour. Then all at once he rose abruptly, as if at a word of command, and lay down on the low bed, covering himself with the blanket.

"'Father,' he said to me—it was the first time he had ever called me Father—'I mun rest a bit. Would 'ee mind sittin' by me and holdin' my han' while I sleep?'

"Of course I assented, and, moving my chair to the bedside, I sat down beside him and took his hand in mine. Almost immediately he fell into a quiet slumber, clasping my hand beneath the blanket; and I remember wondering how he could sleep so calmly knowing what awaited him at dawn.

"How long I sat there, half awake, half dozing, I cannot tell, but I should say it must have been well after midnight when I awoke abruptly, with a conviction that there was someone in the cell besides ourselves. I had turned the gas low when I moved my chair to the bedside, but there was light enough

to distinguish everything in the cell, which was quite bare except for the scanty prison furniture. I could see no one, nor was there anything which could have concealed a man, but still the conviction remained that we were not alone. I thought to myself, 'I must not move for fear of waking Mason,' and then, suddenly, it struck me that perhaps I had already done so, by some unconscious movement, as I woke up, so I quickly glanced down at the bed beside me.

"I wish I could put into words for you what I saw. The man's whole visage was transfigured, changed—glorified, I had almost said—so that I scarcely could believe it was the same. It may have been his paleness in the dim light of the cell, but to me it seemed as if his face shone with a kind of radiance, much as a marble statue does in moonlight; but that was the least part of the marvel.

"What made me catch my breath and held me spellbound was the calm glory of his expression. His eyes were open, with the pupils contracted as if focussed on something only a few feet away, and over the whole face was a look of utter joyfulness, as if something long expected had at last come true, someone long waited had at length arrived; as if, in short, while still on earth and living, he were granted the perfect bliss of the beatific vision—hope giving place to sight and faith to fruition. I cannot tell you whether he was sleeping or in ecstasy,



but this I know, that—condemned felon as he was, with not a dozen hours to live—I would right gladly have changed places with him, if so I could have gained what he was then enjoying. Then all at once his lips began to move, and, though it was but the faintest whisper which came, I knew by some sympathetic influence exactly what it was that he was saying:

“ ‘ *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and we know that no murderer hath eternal life. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.*’ ”

“ Then there came a pause while the look in his eyes deepened in intensity, as if he were listening. This lasted for a few minutes, and then the muscles of his face relaxed again, and once more the lips moved.

*“ ‘ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid; perfect love casteth out fear. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his brother.’ ”*

“ Then quietly his eyes closed, the strange radiance seemed to fade from his features, and I heard no more, though I watched beside him till the dawn.

“ I was present at his execution, but there is no need for me to tell you about that—even now I cannot think of it without a thrill of horror. All I need say is that, after he awoke, he scarcely spoke again, except to pray. Not a word of explanation passed his lips, but it was obvious that his mind was quite untroubled by remorse.

“ As I drove back here, through the fresh June morning, my own brain was working feverishly, trying to solve the mystery which lay behind the affair, but, try as I might, I could form no satisfactory theory. On the one hand, it seemed clear that his mind was running on his brother, and that, in some unexplained way, he conceived himself to be taking the other's place and dying in his stead. On the other hand, I was quite at a loss for the connection. Jim Bull had left England three years before the tragedy, and although, as I told you, some people thought the mother's favouritism had

soured Will Mason, he simply could not have convinced himself that Bull was responsible for the murder, unless he were absolutely insane upon the point, which I felt certain was not the case. Eventually I ceased trying to solve the mystery, and thus it has remained until this morning"—and he held up the envelope I had seen at breakfast.

" ' This letter proved to be from a firm of lawyers in Philadelphia, and it enclosed a sealed envelope which, they say, was found with the will of their client, the late Mr. James Bull. On the outside of the sealed packet are endorsed instructions that it is to be sent to me, if I survive him, or, in the opposite event, to be destroyed unopened. Let me read it to you:

" ' To Rev. P. R. Pater,  
" ' Stanton Rivers,  
" ' England.

" ' Philadelphia, Penn.  
" ' December 27, 1903.

" ' REV. SIR,

" ' I am Jim Bull, Will Mason's half-brother; you will remember me. I understand you showed yourself a friend to him, attending him in gaol and on the scaffold.

" ' I want you to know that he was innocent and did not shoot our mother. I did that, I need not tell you why; but before she died, she begged him to save me, for I was always her favourite, and he promised to do so.

" ' No one in the place knew I was there that night, or even that I was in England; and so, when I made

*off, Will let the suspicion come on him, and you know how it all ended. Anyway, I guess he was more fit to die than I was, or ever shall be ; but I am an old man now and cannot face death without taking some means to let his innocence be known.*

*“ ‘ Yours respectfully,*

*“ ‘ JAMES BULL.*

*“ ‘ P.S.—You will not receive this until I am dead ; if you think right, you may make it public.’ ”*

The old priest sat silent for some time and tears began to gather in his eyes.

“ And shall you publish it ? ” I asked at length.

For answer he rose from his chair and thrust the letter, envelope and all, into the fire.

“ *Cui bono ?* ” he asked, when the papers had fallen to ashes. “ The whole thing is clear now. At his mother’s prayer, Will Mason died to save his brother, and I doubt not the sacrifice was accepted by Him who died to save sinners. The Church teaches that an act of perfect charity wipes out all transgressions, and ‘ greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.’ Although Will Mason’s body lies in a felon’s grave I believe his soul to be in glory. But I cannot think that he would ever wish me to tell the secret which he kept at such a cost.”

## OUR LADY OF THE ROCK

**T**HE chapel at Stanton Rivers has no claims to notice from an architectural point of view, for it is simply a room on the second floor which the old squire-priest fitted up for himself after his ordination. Some of the ornaments and altar furniture, however, are of great beauty, for it has been a fancy of the squire's to have only genuine old vestments, pictures, etc., and in the course of his long life he has got together a collection of great interest and considerable value. Besides the old paintings, mostly "primitives" of the Italian and Flemish schools, there is one quite modern picture, which hangs above the holy-water stoup at the door. It is a little sketch in water colours, representing a small cave or natural recess in a rocky cliff, at the back of which is seen an image of the Blessed Virgin, standing in a niche above a small altar.

The sketch has an odd, out-of-place look beside the old pictures, for as a work of art it is simply negligible, a fact which I remarked upon to the squire when he first showed me round the chapel. To my horror, he answered with a smile of amusement:

"You are perfectly right. But then, you see, I painted it myself."

"Oh, sir!" I exclaimed, "it wasn't fair of you to set such a trap for me."

"Unfair! not a bit of it," he answered merrily; "you simply walked into it yourself. But the sketch isn't here as a work of art, it is more like a votive offering; some day I'll tell you all about it."

I remembered the promise and always meant to claim its fulfilment, but in the end the story turned up of its own accord. It was the Feast of the Annunciation, and among the squire's letters was a picture postcard, in colours, showing a lovely little Italian church standing beside a road amid a grove of orange trees, with the deep blue Mediterranean beyond. I noticed that it bore the postmark AMALFI, and was addressed in a quavering, unsteady hand, such as a very old man would write.

"Do you recognize the place?" asked the squire presently, as he noticed me examining the picture.

"No, sir," I answered, for the view was quite unfamiliar to me, "but then I was only once at Amalfi, and that for a single night, when I was walking from Naples to Salerno."

"Well, you passed it on your road, in that case," said he, "but unless someone told you to look inside, it is ten to one you'd never do so, for it looks just like any other wayside chapel. Indeed, I insisted on that when it was built, though my old friend, Don Giuliano, who sent me that picture of it, was very keen to have something smart and modern



looking. That's just like a Neapolitan; none of them ever see how hideous their fine new buildings always are and how perfectly the simple, older ones harmonize with the setting of the orange groves and the wonderful natural beauty of the place."

"But I don't understand, sir," I broke in. "Did you build the church yourself?"

"Of course I did," answered he; "didn't I tell you about it? It is the new home of *la Santissima Madonna della Rocca*; surely I must have mentioned her to you before."

"Really, I don't think you have," I replied; "but that's all the more reason why you should do so now, isn't it?"

"Well, I think you would like the story," said the squire, "though I quite thought I had told it to you already. If you have finished breakfast we will go to the library, and you can smoke a pipe while I talk."

"I think I see now why I felt so sure I had told you the story before," said the old priest, when we had settled down in the big oriel window. "You see, the whole thing is connected with that sketch in the chapel upstairs; I remember promising to explain why it was put there, and I suppose I must have forgotten to do so."

"I remember the promise quite well," I said; "you made it on the day when you first showed me the chapel, and I put my foot in it so hopelessly

about the picture by the holy-water stoup. I've often meant to ask you for the story, but somehow the opportunity never came."

"Well, you shall have it now," he answered; "but first give me my rug, for it is a little chilly in here this morning." I wrapped the big fur rug round the old priest's knees, and after making him comfortable, sat down again.

"I think it must have been in 1863 that I first met Don Giuliano Mattei, the old priest who sent me the postcard," he began thoughtfully, "so he must be well over eighty now; not that his age matters to the story. What does matter is that I was given a letter of introduction to him by the Rector of the *Accademia*, when I went to Amalfi for change of air, after a sharp attack of Roman fever during my first year there as a student. It was in February, I remember, but Amalfi is a good deal warmer than Rome, so the doctor ordered me there for a month's holiday, that I might get my strength back before the hot weather came.

"To Amalfi I went then, armed with my letter to Don Giuliano, who had just been made parish priest of *San Severino*, a church on the edge of the little town, with a parish consisting mostly of mountain-side and orange grove. He was an old *Accademia* student, and received me most kindly, refused to hear of my taking rooms at a hotel, and insisted that I should stay with him in his big

rambling house, where an aunt of his acted as his housekeeper, cook, and general servant, assisted by an old gardener called Girolamo, who looked like one of Fra Angelico's apostles, and did remarkably little work.

"You have seen Amalfi yourself, so I need not tell you that, although it ranks as a cathedral city, it is really no bigger than a large village. In a week or so I had seen everything there was to see there, and as my strength returned, I made excursions to Ravello, La Cava, and any other places of interest I could hear of in the neighbourhood.

"Don Giuliano, of course, professed a good-humoured horror at my energy. 'You a sick man!' he would exclaim. 'But there, all you *Inglese* are possessed by a demon of unrest'—and he would throw out his hands with a gesture of resignation, and then suggest some new place for me to visit; so that I soon got to know the neighbourhood in a manner I could never have done without him. One day, when the supply of places to visit was running dry, we were discussing what there was left for me to see, when all at once he slapped his cassock impatiently.

" '*Per Bacco!*' he exclaimed, 'I don't believe you've ever been to the shrine of *la Madonna della Rocca!*'

" 'I certainly don't remember the name,' I answered; 'but tell me where it is, and I shall know if I've seen it.'

“ ‘Where it is!’ he exclaimed, ‘why, it is here, or rather up there!’ and he pointed to the top of the hill that rises cliff-like above the sea to the south of Amalfi, towering up almost perpendicularly to the height of fully three thousand feet.

“ ‘What, is it that ruin?’ I asked; for I could see a half-ruined building perched on the very edge of the cliff above us.

“ ‘To be sure it is,’ said he, ‘at least, that is a part of the hermitage. The church, or what remains of it, stands further back a little, and the cave of the Madonna is right below the altar. You can’t see it from here as it is round the corner of the hill.’

“ ‘Do tell me about it,’ I begged him. ‘Why is the shrine at such an inaccessible spot, and why has it fallen into ruins?’

“ ‘To say the truth,’ he answered, ‘I don’t know very much about it myself, although it is in my parish. But the legend is that the Blessed Mother of God used to appear there to a certain hermit, who lived in the cave some three or four hundred years ago. They say she ordered him to found a monastery there, and that this was the origin of the settlement. The monks were hermits of Camaldoli, and soon the cave became a place of pilgrimage and the Madonna used to work miracles there.’

“ ‘Why *used to work*, only?’ I demanded mischievously. ‘Don’t you believe our Lady can do so still?’

“ ‘ But the statue which was the centre of devotion is there no longer, *caro mio*,’ he answered, ignoring my suggestion that his lack of faith was the difficulty; ‘ or rather, I should say, I don’t know if it is. When the French came here in Napoleon’s time, they turned out the *Camaldolesi*, wrecked the sanctuary, and carried off all the votive offerings. The people here say that the statue was hidden somewhere near its old site; and the interesting part of it is that they have quite a definite legend which, I fancy, must have come from one of the dispossessed hermits. It says that, though she was hidden from strangers, it is by a stranger that she will be found. That is the story, is it not, Aunt Anna?’ he said, turning to the white-haired old lady, who had entered the room while we were talking.

“ ‘ *Sicuro*—to be sure,’ she answered, ‘ and *la Madonna* will appear again when she wishes to, never doubt it. When I was a girl, we used to go up to the grotto on the Feast of the Annunciation and sing hymns in her honour, for that was the day of her *festà*. Often, too, we prayed that she would show us where her image was hidden, but we never got an answer, for none of us were *forestieri*.’

“ Well, the end of it was that I climbed the hill that afternoon and reached the hermitage in an hour or so. The size of the place surprised me, for it had

looked a mere hut from below, but the shelf widened round the curve of the crag and there was quite a good-sized church, roofless and with gaping door and windows, and a tiny cloister with some six or seven little hermitages grouped round it; all more or less in ruins.

“Beyond the buildings was a path cut in the rock, which divided after a few yards. I took the upper fork first and soon came to another little plateau, surrounded by a crumbling wall, which had doubtless been the garden, but was now indistinguishable from the hill-side beyond. Returning to the buildings, I next tried the lower path, which struck downward sharply by the side of the church. Soon it became a rough stairway, took a turn to the right, and ended in a little open space with a low parapet on two sides, and what seemed to be the mouth of a small cave on the third. Above was the apse of the church, and I understood now why Don Giuliano had spoken of the shrine as being right beneath the altar, for the cave ran in some yards and must, in fact, have been exactly covered by the sanctuary above. The place looked utterly forlorn and desolate, and a feeling of depression came over me as I passed beneath the low, narrow archway of the entrance and took my first breath of the cold, dank air within.

“ ‘Poor *Madonna della Rocca* !’ I said to myself; ‘ whoever hid you did his work only too well. It



is not likely that anyone will come to seek you in this cold, forsaken place, all damp and dark.'

"Even as the words formed themselves in my mind, I noticed that it was not so dark after all. No doubt my eyes were adjusting themselves to the gloom of the cave after the bright sun outside, and I soon found I could distinguish some faint remains of painting on the walls. After a minute or so I could see quite clearly, and the sense of depression gave place to one of interest and pleasure, as the instinct for exploration arose in my mind.

"I found the cave to be some nine or ten yards deep, and although the entrance was low and narrow, it widened and heightened quickly. In the centre it was six full paces across, and as far as I could judge the height must have been fully fifteen feet or more. The floor was of rock, smoothed by cutting it away in places, and at the far end was an altar, with its altar stone broken right across. Above was an empty niche, its sides decorated with battered stucco pilasters, in the hollows of which faint traces of gold and colour still glimmered here and there.

"When I had examined the place as fully as the light permitted, I came out again and noted the position of the sun. It was fairly low in the south-west, and a little calculation showed me that the cave faced south-east, so that it would be quite well lit up until after 10 a.m. Somehow the place

interested me strangely, and I determined to return at an early hour on the morrow.

“Accordingly, next morning I started about eight o’clock and was at the grotto shortly before nine. As I expected, the interior was now lit up by the sun, which poured in at the narrow entrance and was reflected from the white limestone floor, so that there was quite a strong light within. I now saw that the painted decoration had been carried round the whole of the walls, and that, in spite of deliberate mutilation, quite a lot of the design remained in the higher levels which were out of reach. Except round the niche and altar, the work was painted in monochrome only, the part which remained consisting chiefly of a series of Scripture texts referring to our Lady, and forming a kind of frieze all round the cave.

“I now set to work to examine the place minutely, beginning at the ruined altar with the pathetic, empty niche above it. In front of the altar itself was a predella or step, not cut out of the solid rock like the floor of the cave, but built up of limestone slabs, carefully worked. Like the altar stone above, these slabs had experienced rough treatment, and there were narrow openings between them as if someone had been at work with the intention of displacing them, but had tired of the task and abandoned it. When I stood on the front stone of the predella I found it unsteady, but not

wishing to hasten the collapse of the whole, I did not try to move it.

"My next move was to decipher the inscriptions which, as I said, formed a kind of frieze round the whole cave. The series began close to the entrance with the salutation of the Angel Gabriel, and it struck me, as I made out one after another, that they seemed to be the antiphons of the Annunciation, which had been the *festà* of the *Madonna della Rocca*. I had my breviary in my pocket, and on comparing the two, found my guess was correct, the texts were all taken from the office of the Annunciation. Here and there was a gap, where the paint had peeled off or the surface had perished, but I could fill in these *lacunæ* quite easily with the aid of the breviary in my hand.

"All at once I came upon a variant reading: *virtus Altissimi in te descendet, Maria ; et Spiritus Sanctus obumbrabit mihi*.

" 'What a curious blunder!' I said to myself; for naturally I put it down to the carelessness of the painter. 'Of course it should be: *Spiritus Sanctus in te descendet, Maria ; et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi*, for I had the words before me in the Breviary; they are the *Magnificat* antiphon at first vespers of the feast.

"I looked up at the wall again; there was not a doubt about it. The subject had been transposed in the two phrases and the first person, *mihi*, sub-

stituted for *tibi*, the second person, as if our Lady and not the angel Gabriel were speaking: 'The Holy Spirit shall overshadow me.'

" 'It really is very odd,' I said to myself; 'of course, an ignorant workman might have got the words reversed by accident, but to substitute *mihi* for *tibi* by accident seems almost impossible. If the painter knew enough Latin for that, he must have known enough to see how it changes the whole meaning'—and I stood for some time looking up at the puzzle. All at once it struck me that the words were exceptionally clear and easy to read, distinctly clearer than the texts on either side of them. The inscription was just by one end of the altar, and I climbed up on to the *mensa* to examine it more closely. The words were still some feet away, but I was now on a level with them and could see that the paint of the lettering was not quite the same colour as that of the fainter inscription beside it, and that the whole looked fresher and more recent.

" 'This becomes interesting,' I thought, as I climbed down again. 'If the inscription is a newer one, the curious wording must have been put there on purpose, but what in the world can the purpose be? It can't have been done out of devotion to our Lady, for what possible use could it be to paint up "The Holy Spirit shall overshadow me"?' "

"Then, in a flash, it struck me that the words

might have been changed so as to refer to the hiding place of the missing statue, which tradition declared to be somewhere close to its former shrine. 'The Holy Spirit shall overshadow me.' If the hiding place were marked with some emblem of the Holy Spirit, then the Madonna herself *was* speaking, and speaking very much to the point. The question was, what would the symbol be ?

"I stood there lost in thought for some moments, and instinctively I asked our Lady to help me find her image, if the revival of the cultus would be pleasing to her; and moved by a sudden impulse, I promised to build a little chapel in honour of the *Madonna della Rocca*, if she showed her approval by emerging from the place where she was hidden. My prayer was scarcely finished when my eyes fell on the breviary, which was still in my hand, open at the Feast of the Annunciation. I nearly dropped it in surprise, for the words I read were these, from the first lesson at Matins, *Pete tibi signum a Domino Deo tuo, in profundum inferni, sive in excelsum supra*.\* I gave a great gasp of surprise, but the next moment felt inclined to laugh at myself.

" 'Come now, I'm getting superstitious,' I said to myself. 'It's all the effect of this cold, half-lit cave; let's get out into the open again'—and I walked out into the sunshine and looked over the

\* "Seek for thyself a sign from the Lord, thy God, either in the depth beneath or in the height above."

parapet to the calm blue ocean, three thousand feet below.

"I must have stayed there several minutes, drinking in the beauty of the glorious view, when suddenly I heard a voice, soft, but strangely musical and quite distinct, which came apparently from below the parapet.

"*'In profundum inferni,'* it said; and I quickly leaned over the edge and looked down, to see who could be speaking. There was not a soul in sight, but, far below, my eyes fell upon the form of a beautiful white bird. I was beginning to think it had been all imagination, when the same soft voice spoke again, this time above me.

"*'Sive in excelsum supra,'* it said, completing the text of Isaias. I glanced up quickly, though I felt sure there could be no one there, for the rock rose sheer above the cave. There was no one, of course, but a moment later came a noise of beating wings and a pair of doves circled round the apse of the forsaken church.

"*'Superstition or no superstition,'* I cried aloud, *'I know I'm going to find the Madonna. If Spiritus Sanctus obumbrabit mihi means anything, it means that the image is hidden somewhere and the place is marked with the figure of a dove'*—and I hurried back into the cave.

"By this time the sun had moved a long way round to the west, and the light inside the cave was



fading rapidly. After a while, too, I found I was seeing doves everywhere in the cracks of the limestone walls, and it dawned upon me that I had eaten nothing all day except a couple of little cakes with my cup of coffee at breakfast; so I gave up my search and walked down the hill to Amalfi. On the way I decided to say nothing to Don Giuliano at present, since I wanted to find the Madonna myself, if she were to be found; and I did not want to be laughed at, if nothing came of my labours.

“Next day was Saturday, and also the Vigil of the Annunciation. As I made my way up to the grotto at an early hour, a curious feeling came over me that the search would not be in vain; but after two hours I must admit my hopes began to fade. I had brought some candles with me, and by their aid I peered into every nook and cranny of the rock. Not a sign of a dove could I see anywhere, nor indeed the smallest indication that the rock surface had ever been disturbed at all. The sun was beginning to move away from the mouth of the cave when I sat down on the predella of the altar to rest a little and think things out.

“‘If the whole cave, roof, floor and all, is solid rock, which has never been disturbed, then the statue can’t be here,’ I argued. ‘But I’ve examined every part of it, and every part is solid, *ergo*.’

“‘But have I examined every part of it?’ I asked myself, after a moment. ‘How about the

predella I am sitting on ? Do these stones rest on the solid rock, or no ?

“ In a moment I was up again and at work at the big unsteady stone which formed the front of the predella. It was too heavy to lift, but I succeeded in working it loose and managed to roll it over sideways, so that it lay two feet or so from its former position. The flagstones behind it were smaller and lighter, and in a few minutes I had got one of them out. I found that they were laid upon loose earth which had been piled up to give a level surface for them, and, of course, some of this clung to the under side of the flag I had moved. The second flagstone was the central one of the predella, and as I was carrying it out from its place, it slipped from my hands and fell on its edge on the floor of the cave. The jerk did not break the stone, but it did detach the earth which was clinging to it, and my heart gave a great thump as I saw, on the under side of the flag, the figure of a dove rudely cut in outline.

“ ‘ *Spiritus Sanctus obumbrabit mihi,*’ I cried aloud, for I felt convinced now that I was on the right track; and I renewed my destruction of the predella with redoubled energy. In a few minutes I had got up the remaining stones and was shovelling away the earth beneath them. This was only a few inches deep, and below it the shovel grated on a hard flat surface. Would it be the solid rock, or the

cover of the Madonna's hiding place? I worked with feverish energy to find out.

"Very soon the earth was all shovelled away and I found a long flat slab of marble, like the top of a narrow table, which I was able to prize up with my shovel. Without much difficulty I got it up and, with a lighted candle, peered into the space beneath. It was a long narrow opening, rather like a place for a coffin, and in it lay an object swathed round and round with the remains of rotten coverings, which tore at the slightest touch. Quickly I dragged away enough of them to see what was beneath. It was a carved wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin, bearing the infant Saviour in her arms.

"That evening I told Don Giuliano what I had found, and on the next day he announced it to his people at the end of Mass, saying:

" ' My brethen, we will now go in procession and bring *la santissima Madonna* to San Severino.' "

"This was a development I had not expected; indeed, I had been dreaming of restoring the old hermitage and reinstating the Camaldolese. However, the idea was received with enthusiasm, every able-bodied person in the church joined our procession, and we were soon on our way to the grotto.

"There was no lack of labourers now, and the image was lifted out of its hiding place, and carried up into the half-ruined church above the cave. Here Don Giuliano had it placed upon the altar

for all to see; while, with true Italian readiness, he poured forth an eloquent little sermon on the blessed Mother of God. When he had finished, the procession started for Amalfi again, and all the town turned out to receive our Lady. The statue was placed in San Severino, and during the octave of the feast the church was thronged with people every day, for the news of the recovery of the lost Madonna spread quickly over all the countryside.

“ I went to the bishop and told him of my promise to the Madonna, adding that I would either restore the old shrine, or build a new one in Amalfi, according to what he decided. In the end, he thought it best that the chapel should be built, not on the old inaccessible site, but on the side of the road to Salerno; outside the town itself, and just beneath the ruins of the ancient hermitage. The work was put in hand at once, and just a year later, on the Feast of the Annunciation, the image was solemnly translated and installed in its new home. Every year, on the *festà*, a Mass is said there for the founder of the chapel, and Don Giuliano sends some little token to show that he has not forgotten me. He must be well over eighty now, and we shall never meet again in this life, so you will understand what pleasure it gave me to receive his postcard this morning.”

## THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

**B**EFORE I went to live with my old cousin at Stanton Rivers, I had no idea how deeply interesting religion becomes, when it is studied in the records of personal experience, or the phenomena displayed in the course of man's relations with God. But I had come to the right place to learn, for religious psychology, or, as he preferred to call it, "the phenomena of personal religion," had long been the absorbing study of the old priest's life; and his mind was a storehouse of knowledge on the subject, gained by a lifetime of reading in hagiology, religious biography, and the self-revealing writings of the mystics. No section of his large library was so carefully tended as this one, and in it I found, besides the great standard works on the subject, a large number of rare old books whose very existence is known to few, arranged on the shelves close beside the latest modern studies in mysticism and religious philosophy.

At first sight it was somewhat startling to see Denys the Carthusian, Dame Juliana of Norwich, and Blessed Angela of Foligno in close proximity with Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and works

by Max Nordau, Professor Ribot, or Havelock Ellis. But I knew the squire's methodical character well enough to feel sure that it was my ignorance and not his arrangement that was at fault. Closer acquaintance with the books in question soon revealed the intimate connection between them, and I ceased to wonder why it was that the great folio volumes of the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum* ran along the bottom shelf of all, like a solid foundation of rock, supporting alike works Catholic and Protestant, Jew and Infidel, ancient and modern, Eastern and western.

So far as I remember, the book which first revealed to me the highly uniform character of these personal experiences, no matter to what religious system the individual may belong, was Professor James's deeply interesting volume mentioned above. Though I had often heard it mentioned, I had somehow never come across the book until I found it at Stanton Rivers; and I read it through carefully and slowly, taking a considerable time in doing so. It happened that I had just finished the book and was still smarting under a sense of disappointment with its chilly, tentative conclusions, when the squire chanced to notice the volume in my hand, and asked how I liked it.

"Really, I find it very hard to say," I answered. "The first half of it struck me as quite wonderful, especially the many personal narratives woven into



it so skilfully, but the later lectures on 'Saintliness' and 'Mysticism' were less satisfying, and the two concluding ones I thought frankly disappointing. But, of course, it is only fair to remember that he proposes to supplement them in another work to follow."

"That is interesting," answered the old priest, "but I think I understand how you feel about it. As you say, his marshalling of the facts in the earlier chapters is admirably done, but somehow it is a curiously wrong-headed book. I often wonder that a man of William James's extraordinary insight and psychological training did not see how all these 'human documents' of his are written in sympathetic ink, and cannot really be understood aright except by one who is in sympathy with the emotions which prompted, accompanied, and succeeded the actual experience they record. Probably the explanation lies in the fact that James was a philosopher only, whereas he ought to have been a poet and a mystic as well, to make his work satisfactory. I sometimes wonder what Robert Browning would have made out of the same material; but are you a Browning devotee, by the way?"

I pleaded guilty to the charge and the squire continued.

"Good, then in that case you will see what I mean. Think for a moment of Browning's 'Men and Women' of the 'Parleyings with certain

people,' and especially of 'The Ring and the Book.' I believe the reason why these poems are so marvellous is simply because Browning possessed the power of sympathy in a supreme degree. It is a highly imaginative sympathy, of course, but by it he is enabled to get inside the character he is portraying, to feel just as the real man felt, to see and hear as he saw and heard—in fact, to be for the moment the hero of his poem, in the same way that a consummate actor simply *is* the character he is portraying, having temporarily laid aside his own individuality and taken the other's in exchange.

"That, I think, is the secret of Browning's power, as it is of Shakespeare's and of all supreme poets, and if such perfect sympathy is needed anywhere, it is needed by the writer who would understand and depict the emotions of the soul in its most sublime experiences, that is, in its moments of union with God. A man who has never lost all thought of self in the supreme abandonment of love for another, cannot possibly write a perfect love poem; and one who has never really been in love with God, will never understand aright the language of those who have.

"Now William James, while he makes a great deal of the phenomenon called 'conversion,' never seems to me to have grasped the most important thing about it. He points out, of course, that it involves a shifting of the habitual centres of per-

sonal energy on the part of the individual who is converted, and that, in consequence of the conversion, certain feelings, ideas and beliefs which before were cold, dead and sterile become hot, living and fruitful. But he does not bring out the point that all this will not produce any ultimate religionizing of the soul, unless it involve a complete and permanent change in the man's personal attitude towards God; since true religious life only begins when the soul comes to realize habitually and to act upon the principle that what matters is not so much the relation of everything towards itself, but the position and relation which it personally takes up and maintains towards God, thus making God and not self the central factor of life, the beginning and end of every thought and act.

“Again, while in some cases this change of attitude takes place abruptly at a particular moment—in which event the word ‘conversion’ is precisely the right name for it—in many cases, and especially in the case of the great majority of Catholics, who are brought up from infancy to look upon God and our relations with him as the pre-eminent fact of life which matters infinitely more than all other things put together, no abrupt conversion is customary. Instead of it, we find a growing realization of God and a steady development of the instinct for union with him, by means of which the soul is gradually religionized, so that a deo-centric

attitude of mind and heart and will becomes habitual, without the individual man or woman experiencing any abrupt or instantaneous conversion at all.

“No doubt William James understood quite clearly that such a change of centre—which the old English mystics used to call ‘self-naughting’—was essential for a fully religious life. But I think he largely failed to grasp the fact that this change or conversion was, after all, only a beginning of that life, and not by any means an end in itself. Probably his early training in Calvinistic theology had a lot to do with this; for in that system, once the soul has accepted Christ, there really remains nothing more for it to do at all, since the merits of Christ henceforth do everything for it automatically. I believe, therefore, that, owing to the influence of his early training, William James was not so much interested in the later developments of the soul, and that, in consequence, the phenomena of the religious life, after it had really become a religious life, did not appeal to him like those of the conversion period. So, naturally, his power to sympathize with and to understand those later developments was a very limited one, and his conclusions are necessarily rudimentary and disappointing, because his own personal experience of religion had been nipped in the bud.”

“That explains a great deal,” I said, when the

old priest paused with an apology for the length of his "lecture," as he called it; "and especially it helps to clear up a difficulty I had felt. I mean, why it is that mystical experience seems to be not only rarer, but usually narrower among Lutherans, Calvinists, and the extreme Protestant sects, than it is in almost every other religious system, non-Christian and Christian alike."

"Precisely," answered the old priest, with a look of pleasure. "I see you have caught the point I was trying to make. You are right; it is the theology of Calvin and his fellow reformers which is to blame, not the souls of their followers. Often, indeed, the instincts of heart and mind are too much for the Geneva doctors, and we find their disciples undergoing advanced mystical experiences, which, according to their own theological theory, ought to be needless if not impossible to them."

"Would you say then," I asked, "to change the subject a little, that the phenomena of personal religion, such as conversion, a sense of God's presence or a feeling of desolation, advanced stages of prayer such as ecstasy, union and the rest, are identical in character, whether they appear in a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Moslem, for example?"

"Most certainly," replied the old priest with conviction; "why should it be otherwise? Are not all God's children brothers by nature? Hath

not a Jew eyes? doth not a Buddhist pray, or a Moslem yearn after union with God? The Catholic Church teaches that everyone who strives earnestly to follow the dictates of his conscience is in the 'soul of the Church'; and if God feedeth the young ravens that call upon him, will he not do as much for all mankind, seeing that Christ has died for all? No doubt the dogmatic beliefs of each individual who is striving after union will affect both his prayer and the way in which he understands God's answer to it, much in the way that a message will undergo a subtle modification each time it is translated into a new language. That must result inevitably from the limitation of our minds. But the message is the same all the time; and even though everyone who receives it may understand it with a slight shade of difference, that fact proves nothing more than this, that we are all personal, individual beings, and that no one of us can stand in precisely the same position towards God as that which is occupied by his brother."

"I think I see," I said thoughtfully; "but what a broad, encouraging outlook on religion such a view gives one. Why, it really looks as if, in these personal experiences, we might find a basis for religious unity after all." The old man clapped his hands delightedly.

"Well done! well done!" he cried with animation; "you have got it. That is *the* point of all. Of



course it is a broad view, it wouldn't be worthy of the Church if it were not; and as for encouraging our hope in an ultimate religious unity, it does more than that, it proves conclusively that such a unity does exist already between all those who sincerely love God. Though we may never achieve a formal unity of system in this world, nor bring all men into the visible fold of Christ, still 'actual life comes next,' and with it union, so we shall have all eternity to enjoy it in."

"Well, sir," I said, "I must thank you most deeply for giving me so much help. I think your view is a most inspiring one, and enormously more encouraging than William James's *Conclusions*."

"Well, I'm glad you agree with it so fully," he answered. "It is many years now since I first came to hold what I have just explained to you; but I still remember how the thought came to me like a revelation, and its helpfulness has increased with the years, instead of growing less."

I caught at the word "revelation" and drew a bow at a venture.

"When you say 'it came like a revelation,' do you mean that you received the light in a mystical experience, sir?" I asked.

"Well," said he, with a little hesitation, "I hardly know that I should call it that exactly; but it did come in a somewhat unexplained way, and without any conscious working out in my mind."

I will tell you the circumstances, if you care to hear them.

“Although anything like public controversy has always been distasteful to me, I have often found it impossible to avoid private discussion with non-Catholics who came to hear me preach or lecture; for I did a good deal of such work in the first years after my ordination. Now and then I made converts, and felt the quiet joy which comes of realizing that God is using one as his instrument; but far more often the discussions ended in a deadlock, neither of us being able to follow the other’s mental processes any further, which is always a depressing way to finish. However, I used to make a point of parting friends, and if possible of securing a promise that the others would pray for me, promising to do the same for them in return.

“One of these discussions was with an elderly Quaker, who came to see me one Lent, when I was lecturing in a large industrial centre in the north of England. He was a somewhat stolid-looking man, thick-set, with iron-grey hair and deeply cut features, and, until he began to talk, one never guessed the fire that burned in his heart and soul. He used to speak very slowly, as if waiting to be prompted by some agency outside his own mind; and, knowing as I did the Quaker belief that what a man says on religion is due not to himself, but to the Spirit moving him, his perfect sincerity and

deep earnestness made a great impression on me, and I felt that, in his somewhat rigid and limited way, he was a true servant of God.

“He had no notion of becoming a Catholic, nor was he particularly interested in the Church’s teaching; what he came to me about was another thing altogether. I had preached a sermon on the power of prayer, and he, seeing the subject advertised, had come to hear it. In my sermon I had spoken of belief in prayer as perhaps the one single doctrine on which every religious system was agreed, and had urged that, as in prayer we all had our one point in common, so it was probably through prayer alone that we could advance to mutual understanding and eventually to union.

“He came to see me several times, but our talks proved disappointing; for the old man was a typical Bible Christian and intolerant of any interpretation of Scripture other than his own, which was always of the ultra-literal type, except when such a method played into the hands of the Church—as in the account of the Last Supper—when he went off to the allegorical method. However, we parted good friends, and he promised to pray for me daily as long as he lived. In particular he said that he would ask God to enlighten my understanding that I might preach his word effectively, and especially might lead men of all religions to union by means of prayer. That was at our last meeting,

and I remember that it took place upon Friday in Passion Week; for I left the place next day to preach on Palm Sunday and during Holy Week in another town.

“ I think I may say with truth that the old man and his promise passed from my mind completely, for although I make a *memento* in every Mass I say for all those who have promised to pray for me, I do not attempt to remember all their names; so he vanished at once into that strange limbo of memory which forms a large part of the subconscious self. The next few days were exceptionally full of work, for the parish to which I had gone was a very busy one, and I found myself on Good Friday morning without having prepared my sermon for that day at all. I was not nervous, as I had often preached upon the Passion of Christ, so I contented myself with making a short meditation on the mystery before the Mass of the Pre-sanctified, at which I assisted in the choir stalls, as I was not one of the ministers at the altar.

“ I have told you, I think, that sometimes, when the ‘ direct speech ’ comes to me, it is heralded by a kind of physical collapse, during which my limbs grow weaker and weaker, while my mind becomes extraordinarily alert. Scarcely had the Mass begun when I felt slightly faint, but I put it down to the fact that I was fasting, and tried to pay no attention to it. At the Passion I stood up with the rest, but

I soon found the effort beyond me and had to sit down to save myself from fainting. All this time, however, my mind was exceptionally active, and the tragedy of Christ's Passion and death, which was being sung by the three deacons, passed before me like a vision of some tremendous drama.

"I seemed, if I may say so with all reverence, to look upon the whole scene out of the eyes of Christ himself. My fainting limbs were for the moment his. The fierce throbbing pain in my head seemed concentrated at a hundred points, like the wounds of his crown of thorns. When, for a moment, I gripped the arms of the stall, the sudden pressure of the carved wood against the flesh felt, in my over-wrought condition, as if sharp nails were piercing through my palms, and I almost cried out with the pain. Then, all at once, every sense of feeling seemed to pass away from me, and, instead, a kind of vision of Christ's mental sufferings engrossed my whole being.

"I seemed to be raised up to an immense height, from which my gaze enveloped all the world. All mankind was there, from every land and every age of history; and in some mysterious way I knew that Christ crucified was linked to each one individually by the bonds of his perfect love. From out his heart the precious blood poured down, and spreading forth, flowed over all the world. Some seemed to welcome it and bathed therein, uprising

white and glorious to see. Some seemed not to notice it at all, but passed on heedless, just as if it were not there. Others there were who looked on it with hatred, and 'when they could not help walking in it, they held up their skirts.' But there it was, poured out for one and all, in heedless prodigality of sacrifice, the one sufficient ransom of mankind, infinite cost defrayed by perfect love.

" 'They shall look upon him whom they pierced;' and as with those words the Passion wailed itself out in a mournful descending cadence, my strange half-faint, half-trance came to an end. The short Gospel followed, and then the Master of Ceremonies came across to conduct me to the pulpit. To my surprise I rose and followed him without the least difficulty, and I walked up the steep pulpit steps as easily as possible.

" What I said in my sermon I really cannot tell you, though I know that never in my life, before or since, have I preached with such effect. Certainly the voice was mine, but it seemed to me that nothing else was. Ideas and words suggested themselves, or rather flowed from my lips, as if some external power was using me as a mouthpiece, through which to speak a message in whose composition I had no part. So much was this the case, that I was able to note the effect upon the audience in a way I never do when preaching, lest it should distract me. The very first words caught their



attention, and, in my strange, detached state, I noted like a spectator how the sentences gripped and held them, until the whole great building seemed full of tense emotion, born of taut nerves that strained to catch each word. The sermon was a short one, scarcely twenty minutes in all, and there was a total absence of eloquent phrasing, loud declamation, or carefully contrived delivery; yet somehow it conveyed an impression of absolute authority, as if it came from a source where doubt or hesitation was unknown.

“All at once the flow of words ceased, and I felt a momentary surprise, for really I did not know whether the discourse had reached its logical conclusion; and then with the same sense of being controlled by an overmastering force, I felt myself turn, leave the pulpit, and walk back to my stall in the chancel. As I went a kind of hushed murmur swept through the building, as the pent-up emotion of the crowded church broke forth. Far down the nave a voice cried out some broken words, a woman burst into loud sobbing, and numbers fell upon their knees instinctively to pray. Then, as I reached my place in the chancel, the priests at the altar proceeded with that wonderful series of prayers for all mankind, which forms so prominent a feature in the morning office of Good Friday.

“In turn we prayed to God for Church and Pope, for bishops, priests and all the sacred minis-

try, for catechumens—those children of adoption—for the sorrowful and afflicted, for heretics and schismatics, for Jews and pagans; that all might be united by God's grace into one holy Church, to the praise and glory of his name. That was the moment when the vast inclusiveness of God's plan became clear to me. The vision I had seen of all mankind, united to the cross of their Redeemer by the all-conquering torrent of his precious blood, found its interpretation here; as the Church, the Spouse of Christ, poured forth her prayers for all the human race. It was the cry of those who formed his mystic body, rising to heaven for those who as yet were only in the soul of the Church; a mother pleading for her unborn children, hers, though not yet hers, who counts no human soul an alien to her own.

“The supplications ceased, the last *Amen* died away, and a pause followed, while the acolytes made ready for the creeping of the Cross. As I turned and sat down in my stall for a moment's rest, my eyes chanced to fall upon the space in the centre of the chancel, and I nearly cried out with surprise. For there, full in the middle of the gangway, stood the figure of the old Quaker, from whom I had parted just a week before. I rubbed my eyes, but there was not a doubt about it; the figure seemed as material as you do at this moment, and not in the least shadowy or vague. The man looked just

as he did when I had seen him last, a thick-set figure, with iron-grey hair and deep-cut features, their stolid expression redeemed by the earnestness of his dark eyes.

“For a minute at least I stared at the apparition, which appeared completely unconscious of its surroundings, and simply stood there motionless, save for the lips, which moved slowly as if in prayer. Then, at a sign from the Master of Ceremonies, the whole congregation rose together, and, distracted by the noise, I glanced round for an instant. When I looked back at the centre of the chancel the figure I had seen had vanished; but in my ears I heard the old man’s slow, deliberate voice repeating the words of his parting prayer a week earlier: ‘May God enlighten thine understanding, friend, and may his Spirit come mightily upon thee, that thou mayest be powerful in word to speak as he shall give thee, and lead men to union with him by prayer.’

“I never saw or heard of him again, and he must be dead years ago, for he was an old man when I met him. But I do not doubt that he was praying for me on that Good Friday morning as he had promised, and that to his prayers I owed the inpouring of God’s Holy Spirit, which wrought in me so wonderfully on that occasion.”





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